

SOME COMMENTS FROM THE NEW PUBLISHER

Seven Seas Stamps Pty. Ltd. has acquired publishing rights to the Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue after 25 years' publication by The Hawthorn Press. Under the guidance of Mr. John Gartner, The Hawthorn Press published an extensive range of philatelic titles mainly directed to the specialist. The significant contribution these publications made to furthering collector-interest in the stamps of Australia, Australian States and the Pacific area is considerable.

We have re-structured the Specialists' Catalogue and it is quite certain that not all of the changes made will win unanimous approval. The following comments will help readers to understand this 41st Edition more easily.

1. THE LAYOUT OF THE CATALOGUE.

The 40th edition contained 12 sections and 274 pages. With the annual growth of contents it became increasingly more difficult for users of the catalogue to readily find specific items because of the scattering of listings. We have retained the Kangaroo and George V individual sections; all other postage stamps are listed in chronological order.

For obvious reasons we have also retained the Postage Due and Booklet sections intact.

For convenience we have retained the Specimen section but all individual Specimen overprints are listed with the appropriate normal stamps.

Australian Antarctic Territory and B.C.O.F. stamps are the only non-Commonwealth issues now listed in the catalogue. The former were on sale at every Australian post office and had a status almost indistinguishable from Commonwealth issues of the time. A.A.T. decimal issues are all valid for use within Australia.

The B.C.O.F. issues are of course overprints on Commonwealth adhesives.

All other Australian Territory and related issues will be found in the Australasian Stamp Catalogue.

2. KANGAROO AND KING GEORGE V SECTIONS.

It was extremely difficult to decide whether to dismantle these sections and list the stamps in conventional date and watermark sequence to conform with the rest of the catalogue, or to retain the present format. Logic and consistency demanded the former, consideration for the many collections mounted according to present catalogue format commended the latter.

3. K.G.V. 1d RED.

This has traditionally been the "most researched" Australian Commonwealth stamp and in previous editions of this catalogue had a special section devoted to it. The increasing difficulty of obtaining research material, particularly mint but even unsorted used copies of the 1d red has caused a marked decline of interest in this stamp, when measured by numbers of collectors.

We have contracted the range of shades listed to what is regarded as an appropriate listing for this catalogue. Many Specialists will no doubt continue to research and collect this fascinating issue beyond the scope of our listing; we have attempted to provide a balanced representation for the average user of this catalogue.

4. THE OTHER SECTIONS.

It has not been possible to retain previous catalogue numbers for those sections of the 40th edition which have now been merged; we apologise to collectors who may be inconvenienced by this once-only change of numbers.

Some comments from the new Publisher (cont'd)

5. COLOURS AND SHADES.

There was little reason for some of the shade listings previously given; some lists could be doubled, others contained shades of shades. The greatly increased market value of the individual stamps and the fact that the passage of time and the effect of daylight and artificial light tends to fade many surface printed issues have combined to cause us to delete a number of shades. Distinct colour groupings and all major shades have been retained.

Users of the catalogue who wish to collect a wide range of shades will undoubtedly continue to do so and do not need this catalogue to specify the precise numbers of shades which should be in their collection.

6. VARIETY ILLUSTRATIONS

It is our intention to eventually illustrate almost every variety listed in the catalogue. This project will take several years; an excellent start has been made with the decimal issues.

7. UNMOUNTED MINT

One of the most contentious features of this edition will be the inclusion of a separate pricing column for unmounted mint stamps. This is not an attempt to start a new "fad" but is a response to an existing situation: a majority of collectors are demanding, and collecting, only unmounted mint. Personally, the publisher is totally opposed to the unmounted mint concept but recognises that his is becoming more and more a minority view.

8. PRICING

We have incorporated the European system of symbols to identify the condition of stamps listed, and these are as follows—they appear at the head of all pricing columns throughout the catalogue.

- ★★ Unmounted mint, with full original gum in fresh condition as sold by the post office.
- ★ Mounted mint, previously lightly hinged, hinge remains may or may not adhere to the stamps.
- Fine used, a clean attractive copy.

For stamps not meeting these specifications prices should be reduced according to condition.

For unmounted mint we price only the basic stamp. It would be impracticable to price every single mint variety in unmounted condition. The price differential between ★★ and ★ for the normal stamp will provide the basis for establishing the price of any other item or variation of the stamp concerned.

Prices for varieties are for those in the cheapest shades unless stated otherwise.

Prices for major rarities and items not often bought or sold are based on international and local auction realisations during the last 12 months where available.

9. OTHER ITEMS

This publication is intended to be a Specialist Catalogue for collectors of Australian Commonwealth adhesives—it does not list first day covers, postal stationery, States issues, cinderella, or Territories issues.

THE AUSTRALASIAN STAMP CATALOGUE is an excellent catalogue for collectors interested in subjects not covered by this 41st Edition.

INTRODUCTION

Under a new publisher, the fortyfirst edition of 'The Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue' has a 'new look' with colour facsimiles of stamps, added variety and illustration content and altered listing references in some sections on which the publisher will comment.

In recent editions, but particularly in 1980, the Editor has referred to the rapidity of change affecting matters philatelic. Inter alia, 'The President's Address for 1979' to 'The Australian Commonwealth Collectors' Club of New South Wales' (March 1980 Bulletin) also contains some very penetrating comment on the splurge of new issues, gimmickry, pursuit of the philatelic dollar, the inflationary price deterrent to aspirant specialists, and the relative lack of study potential on recent issues.

It is appreciated that the primary purpose of a postage stamp is to prepay the service of conveyance and delivery of postal articles, but nowadays the secondary purpose of many is investment.

Photo-lithography techniques are efficient, economical and flaw-free, but minutiae have no place in such a catalogue as this.

By contrast, productions by the electro-types of surface and recess (intaglio and photogravure) processes, the transition from imprints and watermark to abolition of both, the experimental perf. pips. of 1957-59, the pre-decimal technical changes, and the more recent perforation-paper-gum complex, although now 'history', all combined to sustain the purist and specialist alike and provide the staff and spice of philatelic life.

This catalogue incorporates comprehensive results of student research, and as a necessary adjunct, equally considerable content of production and other technical details and notes. nevertheless, there still is enormous scope for study on many issues, even on the first issue—the 1d. Kangaroo of 2.1.1913. Some study is currently exercising the minds of a number of dedicated purists who are diligently seeking requisite material. In this respect it is unfortunate that many an item in an auction catalogue is not as informatively described as it might be.

Photo-litho. issues do not provide much scope for in-depth study and today's materialistic dollar-dominated outlook cannot but have a deleterious effect on aspirant specialists—put bluntly, they are being priced out! Varieties always have carried a premium large or small, and research is a consideration at major Philatelic Exhibitions. One is constrained to ask, Is the goose that laid the golden eggs dying or already killed? Will there be a backlash? Are there counter-measures?

Certainly, pricing in this Edition must of necessity reflect the still rising market, particularly the early Decimals. But to maintain and stimulate study incentive, endeavour has been made to judiciously expand content.

The Kangaroo Section has been 'tidied up' to some extent by standardising variety references, introducing each value with brief details of plate, monograms and imprint changes, and including several extra composite illustrations. Further improvement is both necessary and desirable. Additional snippets are found in George V, George VI and Queen Elizabeth pre-decimals. Decimal issues include many additional varieties and illustrations.

That integral part of Australian philately, the sadly neglected Postage Due 1902-1963, appears to be gaining well-merited, if belated, recognition, as since the expansion of this Section—continuing slowly—prices have risen much higher.

The Editor again warmly appreciates the willing assistance from Ivars Mastins (Brisbane), Chris Buckman (Nambour), Dr. A. L. Nicholson (Ballarat), Geoff Durham and Peter Bolton (U.K.), and gladly acknowledges contributions by mail, through Society Bulletins, and the informative details published by Australia Post in 'Australian Stamp Bulletin'.

A much earlier deadline was desired for the complete re-setting and revision of this edition, and a great debt of gratitude is due to the publishers and staff for untiring effort and contribution which culminated in this undoubtedly enhanced production which it is felt will commend itself to all thoughtful philatelists.