

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION (2001)

In this edition a start has been made on replacing the drawings of plate varieties used in previous editions with scanned images taken from actual examples of the stamps. It is hoped that these will provide a more accurate representation of the plate varieties for users. The task of providing scanned images of all plate varieties will be completed in future editions. Most other illustrations have also been re-scanned, hopefully with a consequent improvement in quality.

Trade and collector insistence has resulted in prices for unmounted mint being provided for the more readily obtainable varieties, imprints and monograms. Unmounted mint prices for more valuable items have generally not been given, and will await confirmation of the existence of these rarities in that grade.

The listings of the much-researched Sideface have been improved in many areas. Research has continued on the 1½d and 2d Die I issues, and this is reflected in the new listings, particularly in the 1½d, where a number of new cracked electro varieties are listed, and a number of previously unallocated varieties have now been positioned. There have been several major discoveries since 1994, including one new inverted watermark (1d violet), and a new imprint (1½d Die II). Following the suggestions of several collectors, significant improvements have been made to the layout in most parts of the catalogue. In particular, the 1d section has been thoroughly revised, with all the plate variety illustrations grouped together at the beginning of the listing of the 1d reds, and the 1d violets and greens. The cross-reference tabulations of shades and plate varieties have been rewritten with the aim to make these more 'user friendly'; a similar tabulation has also been added for the 4d orange. The plate variety illustrations have also been grouped together for the 1½d Dies I and II, and 2d Die I, which should make navigation amongst these complex issues much easier.

In the later issues the most significant improvement has been in the 1935 Silver Jubilee issue, which has been thoroughly revised, with a number of new varieties added. There are also some important new plate varieties added in the 1936 Tasmanian Cable issue.

There were some errors in the previous edition regarding the quantities of stamps printed and/or issued. These arose due to different recording systems used by the archival sources, which were not recognised when the figures were first extracted. Those figures have now been corrected, and further research in the archives has uncovered printing figures for virtually all the stamps for which these figures were previously unavailable.

The Market

Since the publication of the first edition (1994) a considerable increase in demand for most pre-war Australia material has been evident world-wide. For the Sideface issues encompassed in this section of the catalogue this demand has generally impacted positively upon prices on a broad scale, whilst the post 1927 commemorative and definitive issues in their basic form, as distinct from proofs, varieties and errors, have not enjoyed the same degree of demand, and this is reflected in price corrections for some issues in this group. Sideface issues both mint and used have generally firmed in price, particularly in punctured 'OS' form, where stock for all but a few issues is difficult to maintain by the Trade. Attractive covers are increasingly sought-after and many issues are surprisingly difficult to find in this form, which is generally reflected in firming prices. An example is the 1913 1d Engraved which, despite having been a base postage rate item in its time, is difficult to find on cover, and rises from \$45 in 1994 to \$100 in this edition.

Demand is particularly strong for specialised material, such as watermark and plate varieties, errors, monograms and imprints (notably Harrison), and of course the extremely finite essays and proofs. In the case of watermark varieties a reasonably accurate census of numbers recorded of the rarities is emerging, and some very solid prices have been achieved in the marketplace, which in turn are reflected in this edition. With plate varieties, however, the relative scarcity of some printings is less clear. For example, the cracked electro varieties listed for the Die I 1½d and 2d contain some of the rarest varieties of Australia. In the case of some cracked electro types, and indeed for a number of other plate varieties listed in this edition, no actual example could be located for scanning purposes in any of the major collections to which we have access. Prior to the appearance of the next edition of this catalogue it is proposed to conduct a census of the numbers of given plate varieties held by specialist collectors. Hopefully, this will lead to a more accurate understanding of the relative scarcity of these varieties for dissemination in this catalogue.