

Printed Postmarks of Australia



by

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Used Stamps

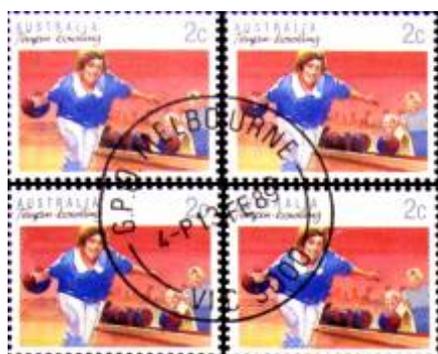
Do you collect “used” stamps? Would you like some with nice circular postmarks and gum on the back? Australia Post has been producing these for over 12 years and selling them for about 5 cents each. They are found in the packs of 50 or 100 used stamps available at most Post Offices. Many collectors are replacing their old used stamps (that have been through the mail stream) with these new machine overprinted or “printed postmark” (PP) stamps.

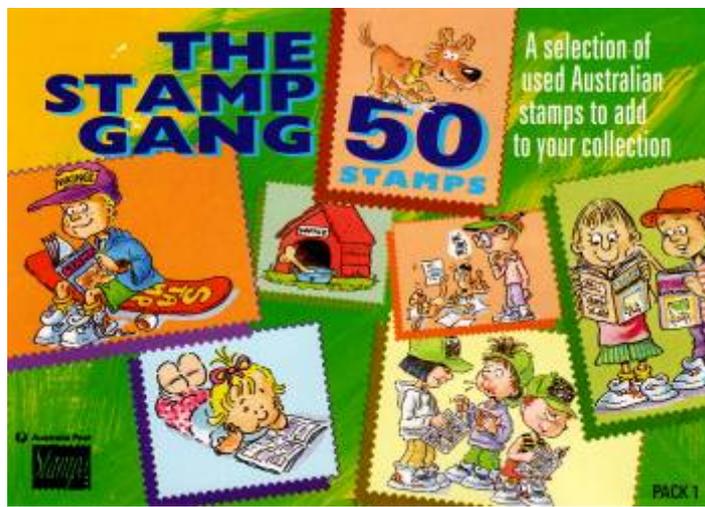


Four Postmark Positions

Why are they called “printed postmarks”? It began back in 1994 when Australia Post decided to recycle the many sheets of withdrawn mint stamps by having them machine overprinted with a simulated postmark. Sheets are fed through a printer and overprinted with a cancellation that was placed over the intersection of four stamps and was repeated in the exact same position on all stamps in the sheet. In some cases, the stamps at the edge received a half cancellation so that the selvedge was not marked. So every stamp on the sheet was postmarked in 4 different positions only. Many printed postmark collectors save these 4 stamps. An unseparated block of four or a complete sheet, rather than individual stamps, are highly prized additions to a collection!

Australia Post does not keep any records of what sheets of stamps or how many they made with the postmark overprinted.





Stamp Packs

PP stamps originally appeared in The Stamp Gang packets of 50 used stamps in 1994. They were mixed with other used stamps (that had been through the mail stream) obtained from commercial sources. These packs were given to school children when Australia Post staff gave presentations at schools and also given away at stamp exhibitions. Most packs of used Australian stamps available at the Post Office contain printed postmark stamps. e.g. The contents of a sample "Collector's Choice" pack of 100 Australian Stamps, No.4, May 2003, contained 35 PP stamps and 65 used stamps.

"Collector's Choice" 100 Australian Stamps No.4, May 2003, RRP \$2.45 (sample contents)	
Printed Postmark Stamps	Quantity
40c	1
40c with tab	1
45c	18
45c with tab	8
49c	3
50c international post	1
80c international post with tab	1
98c	2
Total PP stamps	35
Other used stamps (6 pre-decimal and 59 decimal)	65
Total stamps	100



Current Australia Post Stamp Packs			
Pack	Series	Issue Date	Cost
Bird stamps	1	15 th July 2003	\$2.10
Train stamps	1	15 th July 2003	\$2.10
Marine stamps	2	15 th July 2003	\$2.10
Animal stamps	2	15 th July 2003	\$2.10
Flower stamps	1	15 th July 2003	\$2.10
Australian stamps*	3	15 th July 2003	\$2.10
Dogs stamps	2	10 th August 2004	\$2.10
Cats stamps	2	10 th August 2004	\$2.10
Sport stamps	2	10 th August 2004	\$2.10
Bike & Motorbike stamps	2	10 th August 2004	\$2.10
Dinosaur stamps	2	10 th August 2004	\$2.10
Stamp Collecting Kit**		1 st November 2004	\$9.95
Sniffer and the Stamp Gang's Stamp Album**		2 nd October 2007	\$11.95
"Collector's Choice" 100 Australian Stamps*		1 st November 2007	\$3.95

Notes:

1. These packs contain 50 world used stamps, including some Australian stamps. Two packs, (indicated with an *), only contain Australian used stamps. The "Collector's Choice" pack contains 100 stamps.
2. The stamp collecting kit and album, (indicated with an **), also contain packs of used stamps.
3. A sample Sport pack had 5 Australian PP stamps and 45 foreign PP stamps! (Other countries must be machine overprinting their stamps too!)
4. A sample Australian pack had 50 used stamps – no PP stamps!

Postmark Types

The postmarks were circular and contained the text "G.P.O. Melbourne VIC 3000". Four different types have been identified. (Australia Post has not kept any records of postmark types.)



- 1st Postmark: Smooth "metal-type" thin text "G.P.O. Melbourne VIC 3000". No Datecode.
- 2nd Postmark: Smooth "metal-type" thin text "G.P.O. Melbourne VIC 3000" + Datecode Type #1
- 3rd Postmark: Rough "rubber-type" thick text "G.P.O. Melbourne VIC 3000" + Datecode Type #2.
- 4th Postmark: Rough "rubber-type" thick text "G.P.O. Melbourne VIC 3000". No Datecode.

The datecode had two different formats:

- Datecode Type #1 = T-XDD MM YY. e.g. 4-P13 FE 89, 9-A14JA93, 9-A-7 AP 93.
- Datecode Type #2 = DD MMM YYYY. e.g. 13 JUL 1995.

The text and datecode is just symbolic and does not reflect where or when the stamps were cancelled. The following datecodes (Datecode Type #1) have been identified: 13 FE 89, 23 AU 89, 17 JA 90, 22 AU 91, -2 JA 92, 14 JA 93, -7 AP 93.



Cancelled to Order or Cancelled per Favour

Australia Post's Guideline G8.3.7 "Philatelic Postmarking" states that stamps may be hand cancelled by counter staff at a customer's request provided that the stamp is "affixed to an envelope or cover" and its face value is "at least the current base postage rate for a small letter". This type of postmarking is known as Cancelled per Favour (CPF). A CPF stamp, when removed from the envelope should not have gum on the back.

Counter staff that have no knowledge of Guideline G8.3.7 often postmark individual mint stamps and unpostmarked stamps that are not affixed to an envelope. The mint stamps have gum on the back. The unpostmarked stamps are ones that have been through the mail stream without being cancelled and have been removed from the envelope or cover – hence they have no gum on the back. Individual mint stamps with gum on the back are also known as "Cancelled to Order" (CTO) stamps.

The printed postmarked stamps discussed above are also referred to as "CTO stamps". These can be easily identified as the overprinted postmark is one of the four types listed. Some PP stamps are listed in the Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogues as "CTO stamps".

First Day Covers

Most Australia Post's First Day Covers (FDCs) contain printed postmarks. The date on the first day of issue (FDI) postmark is the "official" issue date of the stamp set, but the postmark may have been printed before, on or after this date. Stamps in a particular set may have been issued on different days (see the example, below).

You can send a stamped envelope to Australia Post and request that it be cancelled with a FDI postmark. The stamp will be hand cancelled. This FDI cancellation service can be requested up to one month after the "official" issue day. Stamps from the set that were issued before or after the "official" FDI will also be cancelled with the FDI postmark, provided they are submitted within the month. Any stamps from the set, including reprints, issued more than one month after the "official" FDI cannot be submitted to the FDI cancellation service.

(Note that some Post Shops have a "First Day of Issue" hand postmarker so you may ask for a "cancel per favour" on the actual day of issue.)

Example: The *For Every Occasion* issue of 2008/09. The gummed se-tenant sheet stamps were issued on 23rd September 2008. This was the "official" FDI. Other stamps in the set were issued on 15th September; 2nd, 28th & 31st October 2008 and 2nd March and 27th June 2009. Only those released before 23rd October 2008 could be submitted to the FDI cancellation service. The FDI postmark was, of course, dated 23rd September 2008. The stamps not issued on this day could be CPF'd with a hand FDI postmark at selected Post Shops, as noted above.

The FDI postmark is a special postmark designed to compliment the theme of the stamp issue. This includes the town or city location shown on the postmark. These special FDI postmarks are only available from the FDC cancellation service, not at the location shown. They are not cancelled at the location shown. Copies of the special FDI postmarks are displayed on the Australia Post Stamps website.

On 4th March 2008 two FDCs were issued containing special metal foil 50c mint World Youth Day stamps. The stamps are commonly known as the gold and silver Popes because they were the same design as the 50c paper stamp depicting the Pope. Yes, the stamps were mint because the printed postmark did not touch the stamp! This is the first time Australia Post has issued mint stamps on an envelope. Once removed from the envelope they are classified as “mint no gum”.



Other Printed Postmarks

The *Impressions* range of products issued by Australia Post every November usually contains a “CTO Collection of Australian Stamps” for that year. The postmarks on these stamps are printed postmarks. Australia Post has some sheets of stamps overprinted with the printed postmark at the same time as making the original sheets for sale.



This is a popular way to obtain a collection of postmarked gummed stamps for the whole year. Many collectors are saving these instead of collecting postally used stamps. Be aware though, now Australia Post has two different perforators, the stamps in the CTO Collection may have a different perforation from the original issue – but that’s another story!

Printed postmarks are also found on stamps of Australian Territories such as Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Christmas Island and Australian Antarctic Territory.



Stamp Cancellation Types	
Type	Description
Postally used stamp cancellation	<p>The postmark on a stamp that has been used for postage. The stamp has been affixed to an article sent through the mail stream and hand or machine cancelled. The postmark can be of any type and in any position.</p> <p>A stamp that has been through the mail stream and not cancelled is referred to as an unpostmarked stamp.</p>
Cancelled per favour (CPF)	<p>A separate stamp or a stamp affixed to an article that has been hand cancelled by postal staff as a favour to the customer. (The stamps must be valid for postage and if affixed to an article their value must be at least the Standard Letter Rate.) The postmark is usually of the circular type and in any position. Once the affixed stamp(s) have been cancelled, the article may or may not be put through the mail stream. Separate CPF stamps are not valid for postage. CPF is also known as "Philatelic Postmarking". (Refer Australia Post's Guideline G8.3.7.) See also, Unofficial cancellations, below.</p> <p>Australia Post used to permit articles with CPF stamps to be covered with a transparent material to prevent the stamps from being further postmarked. This is no longer allowed.</p> <p>Separate CPF stamps may or may not have gum on the back. If they have gum they are known as CTO stamps. See below.</p>
Cancelled to order (CTO)	<p>A separate cancelled stamp that has gum on the back. The postmark may be hand-stamped, per CPF above, or machine overprinted. The machine overprint is known as a Printed Postmark.</p> <p>If the postmark has been machine overprinted on a sheet of stamps it is usually of the circular "G.P.O. Melbourne" type and the datecode does not relate to the date of printing. The postmark is in one of only four corner positions. Stamps with these printed postmarks are available in a range of Stamp Packs from Australia Post. (See picture.) Some CTO stamps with printed postmarks also appear in the annual "CTO Collection of Australian Stamps".</p>
Pen cancellation	<p>Cancellation of a stamp affixed to an article by hand with a pen instead of a hand or machine postmark. This may occur if the article has been through the mail stream and the stamp(s) have not been cancelled. This type of cancellation is to prevent fraudulent reuse of the stamp(s). (Refer Australia Post's Guideline G8.3.7.)</p>
Unofficial cancellation	<p>A postmark applied to a stamp affixed to an article by postal staff or postal sub-contractors that is contrary to postal guidelines or regulations. The article has usually gone through the mail stream.</p>
Forged cancellation	<p>A postmark not applied by the postal system that is an attempt to create a rarity or to convert a stamp to a different category such as "CTO" or "used". Forged cancellations are made to defraud the stamp collector and often contain incorrect information related to the place and date.</p> <p>These fake postmarks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand-stamping a postmark on a stamp using a device and ink pad. This type of postmark is often just a small part of the circle across a corner of the stamp. This simulates a portion of a hand postmark without any text. (Some stamp clubs and dealers provide this service to convert a mint stamp (with gum) into a CTO stamp or an unpostmarked stamp (without gum) into a "fine used" stamp!) • A facsimile of a postmark applied by a computer printer or photocopier to a stamp affixed to an envelope or sheet of paper.
First Day Cover (FDC) printed postmark	<p>The postmarks on stamps on Australia Post FDCs are machine cancelled. The postmark usually has a special design. The datecode is the "official" date of issue of the gummed stamps and does not relate to the date of printing of the postmark. The location relates to the theme of the issue only, not where the FDC was cancelled.</p> <p>Customers may send stamped envelopes to Australia Post requesting that the stamps be cancelled with the special first day of issue (FDI) postmark. This service may be performed up to one month after the "official" date of issue. (Refer Australia Post's Guideline G8.3.5.) Australia Post will only apply a FDI postmark to stamps issued before or during this period.</p>

I would like to thank and acknowledge the Australia Post Philatelic Group for supplying some of the above details and PP samples and Bryan Young for allowing me to photograph some of his PP collection. Version 1 of this article was originally published in Stamp News, May 2008.

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