

Musings and observations from a lifetime in philately

Legals versus Illegals Part 2.



As a full-time stamp dealer, I see thousands of stamps every day but this one stood out for all the wrong reasons. It is the 2000 issue from Iraq - a poor design, badly printed, weak colours with poor registration of both the inks and perforations - but its a UPU official issue and that makes everything right?

In 1970, Australia issued a miniature sheet for the Captain Cook Bicentenary. The sheet measures 155 x 130 mm and because it is imperforate, it was never an option to separate the stamps. In other words, we have a postally valid item larger than a C6 envelope. This is just one item I stumbled upon but I'm sure there are plenty more and larger ones too.



Some critics knock the illegals because they have nothing to do with the country they portray. Well that may be true but consider for a moment a typical Commonwealth First Day Cover. They are printed in England, affixed to envelopes in England and cancelled in England. In fact, by the time they're in a stamp collectors hands, the chances are they haven't even travelled a hundred miles.



And while we're on the subject of First day Covers, the modern trend is to collect them un-addressed. How many collectors are under the delusion that such covers have been through the post and are therefore genuinely used? To take another example, I have a 2001 cover commemorating 50 years of the BBC radio programme 'The Archers' where the stamps have an Ambridge cancel - try and find Ambridge on a map!



GB Modern Issues - In compiling this article I thought I'd find a modern GB stamp that failed to tick any box. Looking through my SG Concise, I was spoilt for choice - the British Post Office seems to have excelled when it comes to poor design. I ended up picking the 'Tap' stamp. Is this the worst stamp design of all-time? No wonder collectors are accepting the 'illegals' with open arms.





To finish this article I feel I must show a few 'illegal' or 'privately produced' stamps. Whatever your feelings are towards these issues, surely you must accept they are good designs, well printed and as far as the thematic collector is concerned, they're winners all round.

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