

ITCS News

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Newsletter of the International Telephone Card Society

ITCS, Telecom Australia Payphone Services, PO Box 3964, Parramatta, NSW 2124

The Society

Welcome to the first newsletter of The International Telephone Card Society. This newsletter will be produced on a regular basis (initially every three months) and will include updates on telephone cards around the world. This first issue concentrates on what is happening in Australia. For those who have only just begun collecting telephone cards, the article by Dr Hiscocks 'Telephone Cards - What to look for' should be useful.

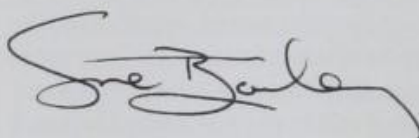
The aim of the newsletter is to act as a forum for collectors. This is your society - so if you have an interesting story to tell, want information from other collectors, or an article you'd like to see included, please write to:

ITCS
Telecom Australia
PO Box 3964
Parramatta NSW 2124
Australia

Or you can fax your item or letter to: 02 891 6678 (+61 2 891 6678 for faxes from outside Australia).

I welcome letters, contributions and ideas or suggestions.

Finally, a big thank you to all of you who have written to me. It has been tremendously exciting for me to see the large number of letters which have come in from all around the world - so many, in fact, that it has made it difficult for me to reply promptly to those of you who have wanted to know specific details about the Telecom Australia Phonecards. I hope this newsletter will answer many of your enquiries. I have received letters from as far afield as the Falkland Islands, the USA, Hong Kong and many from Europe and New Zealand. I wish you all happy collecting!



S. Bailey
Editor

15 March 1991

2nd Annual Telephone Card Fair

to be held in Paris

For the keen collector, this event is a must. Those who attended the first Telephone Card Fair in May last year will agree with me that it was a successful event. Due to the interest shown, 'La Foire Aux Collectionneurs' (the Collectors Fair), which includes telephone cards, will be held over two weeks - from 27 April to 9 May 1991 as part of the 'Foire de Paris' (Paris Fair). The venue is the Porte de Versailles in Paris and will feature telephone cards, miniature perfumes, cinema cards and other collectables.

Telephone Cards — What to look for

by Dr Steve Hiscocks

Dr Hiscocks is well known to many collectors as the author of The Stanley Gibbons Catalogue of Telephone Cards. He is an advisor to Telecom Australia on the collecting of telephone cards.

The collecting of telephone cards is a new and rapidly growing hobby around the world. Over 110 countries now have these prepayment

cards for use in public telephones and more are joining every month.

The first trials of cards in Australia began in Geelong in December, 1989,

with two sets of three cards. Since then cards have been issued in Adelaide (May, 1990), Melbourne and Brisbane (December, 1990), and Sydney (April,



Telecom Australia

Telephone Cards — What to look for

1991). Other areas will follow as Telecom Australia modifies its payphones across the country.

So far there have been no reported varieties in the Australian telephone cards — different types of control numbers (i.e. serial number and/or other identifying codes on the reverse of the card), errors of printing, new printings with noticeably different colours and so on.*

Other Countries

The cards of other countries however show many variations. For example, the cards of New Zealand and Singapore are very popular and widely collected. These are GPT magnetic cards and most of the variations are not in the pictures on the fronts but in the writing on the backs. Here there are two things to look for: the control numbers on GPT cards can be at the top or bottom of the cards and can be of different sizes and forms, and the other wording or design may change.

Singapore

The cards of Singapore provide a good example. At first magnetic cards produced in Japan, similar to those used in Australia, were used. These are found first without, and later with, notches low on the righthand edge to tell blind people which way to put them into the telephone. Singapore Telecom then changed to the GPT telephones and cards. The first of these had only the word 'Telecoms' under the logo on the reverse while all later cards have 'Singapore Telecom'. The controls are of the form 5SIGAxxxxxx where the 'x's are numbers and the SIG means that it is a Singapore card. Later series were 7SIG (two different sizes of figures and letters), 8SIG, and 9SIG instead of 9SIG

— an error! Collecting is very popular in Singapore and collectors there try to have all the different types in their collections.

Many other countries use the GPT cards — Mercury in the UK, Isle of Man, Bahrain, Finland, Macau, most of the Caribbean Islands, Oman and several others. In a few cases such as Singapore and Jersey one can see whether they have been used. In others, such as New Zealand, one can not.

Landis and Gyr

Also widely used are the optical cards made by Landis and Gyr of Switzerland. These are found in the UK (British Telecom), Taiwan, Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal, Israel, Switzerland, Austria and several of the African countries. Here specialists look for differences in the types of control numbers on the reverse and for different widths of the white strip on the front. This strip is known as a 'thermographic' strip and covers an optical track. By looking at this one can see whether the card has been used or not. The width of the strip has changed over the years being first 1.5mm, then 2mm, 4mm and 3mm in succession.

The control numbers have the date of manufacture encoded into them, there are rare special controls and controls are sometimes misplaced or even missing altogether. As with stamps one can also occasionally find shifted or missing colours on the fronts.

There are other types of magnetic cards used in Hong Kong, Korea, Denmark, Italy, Egypt, Turkey and a few other countries and these all have their different points of interest for the

collector but of even more interest to many collectors are the electronic or 'smart cards' used in France, Germany, Norway, Libya, Sweden, Spain and several countries of what used to be the French empire.

Smart Cards

The Smart Cards actually have a silicon chip embedded in the card which is contacted through a small metal pattern, sometimes gold and sometimes silver, on the surface. There are at least six different manufacturers, all with their own distinctive features. One looks for differences in contact patterns, in types of control numbers as in all cards and often, where different manufacturers make essentially the same design of card as often happens in France, for small differences of wording or design.

Perhaps it sounds a little complicated but really it is no more so than collecting stamps or coins. Cards have their control numbers, contact types and optical band varieties while stamps have their perforation varieties, watermarks and types of gum. Both show the same printing varieties and errors and both can be collected mint or used. And, as with other types of collectables, the collector can choose the level at which to collect. Do you collect just one of each design and value or do you collect every variety of each card? It is up to you!

** Editor: I have received evidence of a variation in the yellow colour between two \$5 generic cards. This is the only difference or error in the printing of Australian cards of which I am aware. I would be pleased to hear from any other collectors who have found varieties of a card type.*



News from Australia

The latest issue from Telecom Australia is the 'Wildly Different' series. The six cards (2 x \$2, 2 x \$5, 1 x \$10, 1 x \$20) have been designed in association with the Taronga Zoo which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. The cards naturally are of zoo animals and scenes. The \$2 cards show an orang-utan and an echidna; the \$5 cards feature giraffes and a platypus; a cheetah is displayed on the \$10 card and the \$20 card is of the front entrance to the Zoo. These cards will be on sale in Sydney in April 91.

A Perth (Western Australia) series is currently in production for release in May. A \$2, \$5 and \$10 card will be issued. The \$2 card is of the Perth Skyline; the \$5 card shows the magnificent Karri forest; and the last card of this issue is the \$10 Bungle Bungle card. 50,000 of each will be produced.

Other recent issues in Australia are the Queensland and Victorian sets.

These were released in December 90 with the introduction of Telecom Phonecard to Melbourne, Brisbane and the Queensland Gold Coast. The two series show scenes from Victoria and Queensland; each set consists of 2 x \$5 cards and 1 x \$10 card.

There has been some confusion and criticism over the number of cards issued by Australia. Below is part of the issuing policy for Australian Telecom Phonecards. Although the initial number of cards is quite high, the number of issues and the values will be as low as possible once Phonecard is available nationally (from November this year).

Australia's issuing policy

Telecom Australia is progressively installing Phonecard payphones throughout the country. As each state or territory starts using the Phonecard system, a new set of cards is released. This will continue until Telecom Phonecard is available throughout Australia. Where possible, the number of new card designs and the value of the

cards will be kept to a minimum. Only one set is being issued per state or territory. Generally, these cards are available only in that state, although some overlap does occur.

The states of Australia are: New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia. The territories are: the Australian Capital Territory (Canberra) and the Northern Territory.

However, it is not intended to continue issuing cards on this basis. Once Telecom Phonecard is available throughout Australia, all official Telecom cards will be issued nationally and Phonecard releases will take place on a regular schedule. The first national issue of Australian Phonecards will be in November 1991.

It is Telecom Australia's intention that high value card designs (e.g. \$50) will only be changed after the card has been on the market for a considerable period of time. The regular denominations are \$2, \$5, \$10 and \$20.

News from around the world

United Kingdom

Paytelco, a joint company formed between Mercury and GPT (GEC Plessey Telecommunications) has reached agreement with the Football League to issue cards for, eventually, all 92 of the English League clubs and some of the Scottish clubs. There will be two cards for each club, a team photograph card which will cost £2 and will be changed each year and a £5 card bearing the club badge which will remain constant. Only around half of these cards will be issued this football season and the rest will follow next year. Famous football names such as Tottenham Hotspurs, Norwich City and Derby County are among the first to appear.

Jersey

A new series of twelve 40 unit (£2) cards depicting all of the parish churches on the Island of Jersey are expected in March or April of 1991. There will be 15,000 of each card.

Singapore

After sticking with the Merlion series for two years, Singapore is due for a flurry of new major issues in early 1991. These include a set of orchids (Joachim, Twinkle and Beauty at \$10, Goldiana at \$20 and Morley at \$50), a set for the Chinese New Year (\$10, \$20, \$20, and \$50) and a festival series of the same values. These will be large editions with print runs ranging from 50,000 to 800,000 so they will not be rare. It is, however, worth watching out for the advertising issues of Singapore, some of which are in issues of 10,000 or less and in a country where collecting is as popular as it is in Singapore, these can become unavailable quite quickly.

New Zealand

The New Zealand phonecard scene has been quite active in recent months with cardphones now to be found throughout the entire country. This has introduced phonecards to the general population and many people are

discovering that phonecard collecting can be an interesting and rewarding hobby. The recent colourful Christmas issue proved to be very popular with the \$10 and \$20 cards selling out very quickly. Mint \$5 cards are now no longer available and used Christmas cards are seldom to be found in phone boxes.

The Standard Satellite issue, comprising \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$50 cards, has proved to be a gold mine for the specialist collector with a number of reprints occurring. These reprints can be readily recognised by the different code numbers that are imprinted on the reverse of the card. The Satellite issue is due to be replaced shortly with a new definitive issue of cards depicting the scenic South Island. The card values will be \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$50 and are due to be released to the public in early May. Other issues are to be expected later in the year but details have not yet been released by Telecom New Zealand.



Telecom Australia

The International Telephone Card Society

The International Telephone Card Society has been established by Telecom Australia to promote the collecting of telephone cards throughout the world.

The aims of the society are:-

- To promote telephone card collecting around the world;
- To enable collectors from many countries to contact each other;
- To make freely available information from around the world regarding telephone cards;
- To produce a regular newsletter as the main means of communication to members.

Do you know someone who would like to be a member of The International Telephone Card Society? If so, just get them to fill out the form below (photocopies are acceptable). (PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Address:

Post code: Country:

Occupation/business:

Age group: ☐ Under 11 ☐ 11-20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40
 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ 60+

Mail completed form to:

ITCS
Telecom Australia
PO Box 3964
Parramatta NSW 2124
Australia

Countries with members of the ITCS:-

Australia	Indonesia	Papua New Guinea
Austria	Isle of Man (UK)	Portugal
Belgium	Italy	Saudi Arabia
China	Japan	Singapore
Falkland Islands	Jersey (Channel Is, UK)	Sweden
Finland	Malaysia	Switzerland
France	Netherlands	Taiwan
French Polynesia	New Caledonia	United Kingdom
Germany	New Zealand	USA
Hong Kong		



Telecom Australia