

ITCS News

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Newsletter of the International Telephone Card Society

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

Editorial

This ITCS News has a number of articles written by members, including one about telephone cards in the USSR. Also in this issue, Dr Hiscocks reports recent news from around the world, and Alan Kilpatrick writes about more New Zealand phonecard varieties.

Contributions by members are welcome, but may be edited due to space requirements. Contributions should be a maximum of 1,000 words. When writing, keep in mind that not everyone will be familiar with the cards from your country. Space for photographs of cards is limited. If English is not your first language, your

article can be translated, so don't let that stop you!

Thank you to everyone who returned the card stating their mailing list preference. To those of you have not replied, your name will be placed on the Private mailing list. That means you will continue to receive ITCS information, but your name and address will not be published. People on the Public list will receive ITCS information and will also have their details published to allow other collectors to contact them. If you have not yet returned the card, or if you have lost it, please write to let me know your mailing list preference. It is hoped that this list will be ready for mailing in early 1992.

The number of members continues to increase, and we now have members from Bahrain, Brazil, Cyprus, Denmark, Guadeloupe, India, Ireland, Martinique, Pakistan, Seychelles, Spain, United Arab Emirates and USSR.

All opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor. Where possible, articles contributed by members are verified, however Telecom Australia accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the information printed in ITCS News.

The Editor

October 1991

New Zealand News

Alan Kilpatrick

Alan Kilpatrick is a well-known New Zealand dealer in telephone cards. His postal address is: PO Box 588, Dunedin, New Zealand.

In the last issue of ITCS News, I covered in some detail the reprints of the Standard Satellite set of phonecards. In this issue I will discuss the varieties that can be found in the other sets of New Zealand telephone cards.

Trial issue

No major varieties have been discovered in this issue. Minor misplacement of the control number is not uncommon.

First Satellite Issue

The major variety of this issue, and possibly the most important variety in all of New Zealand's phonecards, is to be found in the \$5 value. To date four examples have been reported with a deep notch. This card, and the others in the set, normally have a shallow notch. Note that only the Trial Issue was issued with the deep notch. All other NZ cards normally have the shallow notch.

Another interesting variety occurs in the \$2 cards. Two examples have been discovered with what we call the 'European Zero' or 'Slash Zero' variety. The control number on the reverse of the card commonly includes the numeral zero and this is usually represented in the normal way, i.e. '0'. The serial numbers of the two cards mentioned include zeros which have a slash through them, i.e. 'Ø'.

Serial numbers of four, or possibly five, distinctly different types can be found on

cards in this issue. It does seem that these different types of serial number represent different printings. Several collectors are studying this field and I may be able to present their findings at a later date.

Standard Satellite Issue

Other than the reprint errors, which were covered in my first article, the \$2 card can be found with the European Zero variety mentioned above. In this instance a reasonable number have been discovered but it is still, however, a relatively scarce card.

Of some interest to collectors is the great variety of shades which can be found in the \$5, \$10 and \$20 values. These shade varieties do not represent different printings. Rather they show the difficulty experienced by the manufacturers in maintaining consistent colours, particularly when these colours were quite dark.

The \$50 card can be found in two different shades. One is a deep, very rich crimson and the other a somewhat dull crimson. These shades switched at regular intervals and seem to represent a series of short run reprints.

Commonwealth Games and Christmas Issues

No varieties have been reported.

Landscape Issue

The \$5 value can be found in two different

shades which appear to represent two different printings. The difference can best be seen in the blue colour of the sky and mountains. The original shade could be described as deep blue and a distinct mauve tinge can be seen. The new shade could be described as pale blue and in this case a green or yellow tinge is evident.

General Note

Many New Zealand cards are now known with the control number completely missing. Quite a number are no doubt genuine but collectors should be aware that the control number can be removed with relative ease. Because of this fact, these missing control varieties, while rare if genuine, will never command high prices.

New Issue News

The Lighthouse special issue was released on July 22 and comprises four cards as follows:-

\$ 5 Cape Egmont
\$ 5 Cape Palliser
\$10 Cape Reinga
\$20 Castle Point

These magnificent cards have proved extremely popular with the public and collectors alike. The next special issue to be released, possibly in October, will be the animals set.



Telecom Australia

Comstar Cards

I.M. Lobovsky is the General Manager of Comstar, in the USSR. He was educated in Moscow, and attended business school in Coventry, England. His address is: Comstar, 2a Krasnostudenchensky Pr. 127434, Moscow, USSR.

The Soviet-British Joint Venture Telecommunications Company 'Comstar' (Communications Star) is the first independent company in the field of telecommunications in the USSR. The founders are the Production Association 'Moscow Local Telephone Network' of the USSR Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, and GPT.

The first payphone was commissioned on 10 January 1990. Comstar payphones operate in Moscow, Black Sea health resorts and in the tourist complexes of the old Russian towns.

In January 1990, the first Comstar series of phone cards went on sale (2.1, 2.2, 2.3). This series depicts the Moscow Kremlin Cathedrals (2.1, 2.2) and the Russian winter view (2.3).

2.1 — The Pokrov Cathedral (St Basil's Cathedral) was built in 1561 under the edict of the Czar Ivan Grozny to commemorate

the victory over the Kazan Khanate. This is a masterpiece of Russian architecture.

2.2, 2.4 — The Golden cupolas of the Kremlin Annunciation Temple, built in 1489 as a House Church of the Russian Czars. It is considered to be the pearl of ancient Russian architecture and occupies the central part of the Kremlin. The internal decoration is priceless.

The second series is 'The Kremlin Treasury' (2.5 — 2.8). All pictures are in black and gold stressing the antiquity, richness of decoration and traditionally large amount of gold in the antiques of the Orthodox Church.

The first of the four telephone cards (2.5) depicts 2 icons by Andrey Rublev and Feofan Greck (year 1405).

The second phone card (2.6) depicts the wall-painting 'Boyar's Council meeting' (16th century). The wall-painting is in the Hall of Facets (1491) — the most ancient civil building in Moscow.



2.6 Boyar's Council Meeting

2.7 — The paintings of the Annunciation Cathedral (1508) with icons by Feofan Greck and Andrey Rublev. The richest internal decorations of the Cathedral are in contrast with the elegant, refined and simple white-stoned temple.

2.8 — The Czar Rooms of the colourful Tower-Chamber Palace (1636). The Czar Rooms consist of the Front Chamber (outer entrance hall), the Cross Chamber (reception room), the Patronal Chamber (study), the Bedchamber and the Chapel.

A new series of phone cards 'Russia's Ancient Towns' will shortly be on sale. It consists of 7 multi-coloured phone cards depicting the beautiful places of the ancient Russian towns.

In addition, we have agreement in principle with the President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, and his colleagues to issue phone cards with their portraits near the walls of the 'Russian White House'. It was here that democracy was victorious on August 21-22, 1991.

I have briefly informed you of what is depicted on Comstar phone cards. I hope this information will be useful for collectors, specialists and all interested people. Comstar wishes to provide an opportunity to the public to collect Soviet telephone cards. We shall be glad to hear from collectors, clubs, dealers and magazines.

| No. | Units | | Date | Description | Catalogue Price US\$ |
|----------------------|-----------|------|-------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Conv Roub | US\$ | | | |
| 1. Promotional Cards | | | | | |
| 1.1 | 1000 | NIL | 1987 | Multicolour, 1500 | 60 |
| 1.2 | 10 | 20 | 4/89 | GPT — MGTS, Multicolour, 5000 | 40 |
| 1.3 | 25 | 50 | 4/89 | GPT — MGTS, Multicolour, 5000 | 40 |
| 2. Phone Cards | | | | | |
| 2.1 | 10 | 20 | 1/90 | Comstar, Multicolour, 25000 | 8 |
| 2.2 | 25 | 50 | 1/90 | Comstar, Multicolour, 25000 | 20 |
| 2.3 | 50 | 100 | 1/90 | Comstar, Multicolour, 20000 | 90 |
| 2.4 | 120 | 240 | 10/90 | Comstar, Multicolour, 25000 | — |
| 2.5* | 20 | 11 | 3/91 | Comstar, Multicolour, 15000 | — |
| 2.6 | 40 | 22 | 3/91 | Comstar, Multicolour, 10000 | — |
| 2.7 | 20 | 11 | 3/91 | Comstar, Multicolour, 15000 | — |
| 2.8 | 40 | 22 | 3/91 | Comstar, Multicolour, 10000 | — |
| 2.9-2.13 | 40 | 22 | 10/91 | Comstar, Multicolour, 5 × 10000 | — |
| | 60 | 33 | | | |

* Since November 1990, the exchange rate has been changed as follows:
US \$1 = 1.8 convertible roubles.

News from around the world

Andorra:

Andorra's first telephone card was issued on 15 May 1991, with a print run of 20,000. This was replaced on 5 July by the second design. Three more designs are due to be issued over the rest of 1991. The 900 pta cards are illustrated and hold 100 units. They can be sent to collectors by the Service de Telecommunicacions d'Andorra at 50FF plus 28.30FF postage within the EEC for one or two cards.

Egypt:

It appears the Urmet system LE20 card used in Egypt has been discontinued. The LE40 value is still available.

Finland:

Another of the 52 Finnish telephone companies, the Helsinki Telephone Company, has issued GPT cards.

Great Britain:

New offshore cards for Philips Petroleum issued by IPL (Scotland) should be available in October, in values of £2, £3 and £6. A complimentary card was issued for Offshore Europe '91, an exhibition in Aberdeen in September 1991. Only 25,000 were printed so watch out for this one! Special cards of £2, £5 and £10 for use on the Dundee University campus are expected in late

October or November. The Edinburgh Tattoo cards, intended for visiting soldiers, are said to be very popular.

The new BT private cards have begun to appear in issues as low as 500. Ten have been issued although this will probably have doubled by the time this appears. These include The Alternative Collection, First Phonecard, Collect British Phonecards, Pelennor, Academic Tutors, Ethel Davis School (charity card), Jester, Wandel and Galtermann, Commsec and a card for a nostalgic train trip from London to Brighton.

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Telecom Australia

Guinea Bissau:

A 'Guiné Telecom Card' from Guinea Bissau is a mystery card and seems to bear no value in currency or units. This usually means only one value has been issued. It is not made by any of the usual manufacturers and it is unclear how it works. There is no obvious magnetic strip and the card is translucent to a very strong light. The word 'Solape' appears at the bottom right on the reverse and may be the manufacturer. Can anyone help?

Equatorial Guinea:

Equatorial Guinea has a single smart card made by Schlumberger. The contact is in the same position as the French cards — in the top left corner.

Hungary:

A 50 unit Hungarian card of a windsurfer made by Gemplus has been issued. The contact is in the International Standards Organisation (ISO) position towards the centre of the left hand edge. A 120 unit

card depicting a building also exists.

Jersey:

Two new cards have appeared. The first commemorates the 'Battle of Flowers' which is a float competition held every year in Jersey. The card depicts a 3 metre high Teddy Bear made of flowers which won first prize in 1990. The second card is the first advertising card from Jersey. It is issued for and sold by the Seymour Hotels in Jersey. It is also available to collectors through Jersey Telecom. Both cards are of 40 units.

Malta:

Two Schlumberger smart cards were issued in early July.

Poland:

Landis and Gyr cards have been emerging for some time and may be hotel cards. Urmet cards, like those of Italy, are beginning to appear. The set of four cards are reported to commemorate the Pope's visit to Poland. Trials of GPT cards will start soon with three

cards to be issued. Two of these are GPT 'standards' — the Tower Bridge and Big Ben cards used in Singapore for the Queen's visit — and the other shows a local scene. It appears trials of several systems are being conducted at once.

Portugal:

Smart cards by Schlumberger are beginning to appear and are issued by TLP (Telefones de Lisboa e Porto SA). There are two contact types — the Texas Instruments butterfly contact and the newer 'tulip' type which are both found on both 50 and 120 unit definitive cards. Contacts are in the 'ISO' position. Two advertising cards have been issued, both of 50 units, for the Renault 19 car — one red and one black or dark green. Both are said to exist with each contact type.

Vietnam:

A GPT system has been installed by Uniphone, Malaysia and two cards of 30 and 300 Dongs supplied.

Australian News

Some Telecom Phonecard Collectors Editions will be withdrawn from sale in 1992. The sets affected and the withdrawal dates are:

| Date | Sets |
|------------------|--|
| 31 March 1992 | Geelong |
| 30 June 1992 | South Australia, Grand Prix, Queensland, Victoria |
| 31 December 1992 | New South Wales, Western Australia, Canberra (ACT), Northern Territory, Tasmania |

After the dates specified, any Collectors Editions remaining in stock will be destroyed. Remaining cards will be on sale until stocks run out. Some cards, such as the \$10 Brisbane City card are now only available in the Collectors Edition.

1992 issues

Australia Day: One Phonecard commemorating Australia Day, celebrated each year on 26 January, will be released for Australia Day 1992.

Olympic Series: Phonecards will be released by Telecom Australia in the lead up to the 1992 summer Olympics. The series will be issued in stages, with the full set of six Australian Phonecards released by June. Five designs will feature: hockey, swimming, cycling, track and field, and the marathon. The sixth Olympic card features Willy the koala, which is the official mascot of the Australian Olympic Team. A Collectors Edition will be released featuring the full set of six cards.

Endangered Species: Two cards featuring endangered Australian wildlife will be issued in the second part of the year.

Christmas: Two cards will be issued for Christmas 1992.

\$2 Generic Phonecard for sale

The \$2 Generic Phonecard is not available in

a Collectors Edition folder. This card is now available by mail order. A minimum order of 3 cards applies.

Reprints

There was an error in the last issue of ITCS News. The original code for the Victorian \$10 Grampians card was T4C3, not T4C3-3 as stated. The reprint code of T4C3-2 is correct. I apologise for any confusion this mistake may have caused and thank those who contacted me to point out the incorrect code.

Telecom Phonecard Issuing Policy for Official Issues

Telecom Australia will commence issuing telephone cards for national distribution from November, 1991. These national issues will be known as the official issues of Telecom Phonecard. A committee has been established to deal with design and issuing policies, and approval.

All Telecom Phonecards issued prior to November 1991, as part of the implementation of the telephone system are special edition implementation issues.

Telecom Australia will use Australian designers and will feature original designs of subjects capable of being portrayed in detail on a telephone card.

There will be a maximum of ten official

issues per calendar year. The issues may consist of a single card or up to a maximum set of six telephone cards. There will be a maximum of twenty designs per year.

The denominations of the Phonecards will be \$2, \$5, \$10 and \$20 until further notice. A Generic Phonecard will be issued for each denomination. Denominations which are less frequently used will be issued for relatively longer periods.

There will be a minimum official card print run of 50,000 per design and each issue will be available for sale until the issue is sold out or stopped through special circumstances determined by Telecom Australia.

Generic and general purpose designs may be re-issued. Commemorative telephone cards will only be issued once.

Design Categories for Official Telecom Phonecard Issues

Generic: The same design will be issued for all denominations. The colours will vary to distinguish the different face values. The generic card design will remain unchanged for a minimum period of two years.

Commemorative: A commemorative design will highlight:-

- an anniversary
- events of national and international significance
- telecommunications historical events
- historical figures of national or international significance

General issue: cards will feature subjects of interest to the general community.



Thematic Collecting — An Alternative Approach

Dr Steve Hiscocks

One way of reducing the field of interest from the 124 issuing countries is by thematic or topical collecting. This is collecting by type regardless of where the cards were issued. Usually thematic collectors look for cards which illustrate a favourite subject such as animals, flowers, pictures of telephones, planes, sport and so on.

Some thematic collectors of telephone cards collect by technology. Many French and German collectors collect only 'smart' cards, or electronic cards. About 22 countries now issue electronic cards. However, the minimum card value is generally about Aus\$10 making specialising in this field rather expensive.

Collecting Landis and Gyr optical cards tends to be more economical. Landis and Gyr have manufactured for 35 countries at different times so there is plenty of scope. I know of no collectors specialising in either GPT or Autelca cards.

Currently there is little information for the thematic collector similar to that of specialised thematic stamp catalogues. Perhaps thematic collectors who read this could write to the editor of ITCS News with articles about their particular thematic interest.

Closed User Group

One area of thematic collecting which has always been popular is the closed user group

category, especially the cards used on the oil and gas platforms in the North Sea.

Microwave linked telephone facilities to shore are very expensive, so oil companies issue telephone cards, either free or at highly subsidised rates, to allow their employees to make cheap calls.

Ten such companies have so far issued cards: Amerada Hess, Amoco, British Gas, British Petroleum (BP), Britoil, Marathon, North Sea Sun Oil and Sun Oil Britain, Shell and Texaco. Philips Petroleum will be added in October or November. Most of these companies use Landis and Gyr optical cards of a utilitarian design although with the usual variants of notch and, in the case of the Shell cards, various widths of white band. BP have also issued a GPT card (with and without control numbers) and are now also using a set of four Autelca cards issued by IPL (Scotland). Philips Petroleum will also use IPL (Scotland) cards as will Amerada Hess. It is not known in this case whether these will replace the Landis and Gyr cards currently in use or are to be used on a different platform.

Another area is prisons. England, France, Scotland and the USA have had special prison cards for similar reasons to the oil companies. In the case of British prisons, ordinary BT cardphones were in use but demand for cards exceeded supply, so cards were smuggled in and sold off at highly inflated prices by the unit.

The authorities responded by overprinting officially available BT cards with Home Office or local prison hand stamps but the prisoners countered this by forging the stamps. The authorities therefore introduced their own cardphones, differently encoded from those of BT, so that smuggled cards no longer worked. Cards were then printed for use only in the prisons.

There are four varieties of the English cards and only the single card for Scotland. The forerunners, the overprinted standard BT cards, are complex and no-one has really sorted them all out yet.

Both the French and the USA prison cards have, I understand, been discontinued.

A member writes . . .

If collectors are prepared to be innovative and build imaginative thematic collections rather than dogmatic chronological 'complete' collections, then there is a great future for telephone card collecting. Japanese used thematics are available for every subject under the sun and are inexpensive. Collectors in the UK are paying £100 or even more for variants with deep or shallow notches and so on, but in pursuing these they are losing sight of the reason for collecting — for fun and enjoyment.

Eric Elias, 58 Greenacres, Hendon Lane, London N3 3TS, UK.

Bulgarian Telephone Cards

Lazar Lazarov

PO Box 5, 5800 Pleven, Bulgaria.

Bulgaria introduced four kinds of telephone cards in 1988. These cards were of East German manufacture. The following denominations were produced:

- * one lev — green;
- * two levs — orange;
- * five levs — blue; and
- * ten levs — yellow.

All cards had the same design of a brown arrow on a coloured background. The value is printed on the front of the card in Levas, and 'Association des Telecommunications' and 'Phonocarte' appears in the arrow with the same information repeated in Bulgarian letters. Several short directions are printed on the reverse in Bulgarian and French. Two digits on the reverse indicate the year of production. For example, 1988 is marked as /88. Telephone cards from 1988 have a five digit serial number. The highest known is 29852.

The same card design was used for cards produced in 1989, but without a serial

number. Telephone cards from 1990 do not have serial numbers, but do have a new text 'Comite des PTT et de l'informatique' and 'Phonocarte' — again repeated in Bulgarian.

The number of telephone cards issued was insufficient for usage on a large scale, so cards were obtained from post offices and recharged with telephone units. This process occurred several times for each card!

In 1991 inflation put telephone costs up and no money was available to order new telephone cards. Existing cards were overprinted with new values on the telephone cards of the least worth (1 and 2 lev cards). In 1991 there have been three different overprintings:

- 10 levs on the old 1 lev from 1990
- 20 levs on the old 1 lev from 1988, 1989 and 1990
- 50 levs on the old 2 lev from 1989

Overprints of ten levs on the old 1 lev from 1990 are of two types:

1. With large black dots on the letter B;

2. With a white spot on the zero and smaller black dots on the B.

New overprinted cards are now being made.

The total number of telephone cards produced for widespread use in Bulgaria is about twenty. Some telephone cards are especially made for post office workers. These are not for sale but are produced on a small scale for official usage. Overprinted telephone cards of \$US3.00 were on sale to foreign guests of the country in 1990. The 1 lev green telephone cards were used for this purpose. Some green overprintings on 10 levs from 1989 are known to exist with the \$US3.00 value.

There are many variations in the colours and overprints of all Bulgarian telephone cards. This considerably widens the field of collecting and studying Bulgarian telephone cards. And while it is too late to collect all the telephone cards from Italy, for example, now is the time to start a really good collection of Bulgarian telephone cards.

