



## Specimen Fundamentals

Why were specimens issued in strips of three? Was this a UPU format requirement?

The opportunity arose to ask this and other questions of John Cruttenden, a specialist in specimens and currently working on Jubilees.

On the opening question, John writes: “The UPU did not have a format requirement, only x 3 of each stamp x the number of UPU members + a few for records and future requirements. Handling was clearly simplified by leaving the 3 stamps joined (hence occasionally strips of 3 may be found but they are rare). The punch device could only accommodate strips not blocks. All printers conformed to the same requirements and codes of practise. From about 1907 stamps were sent to the UPU in strips of 3. (For a short period in the late 1800’s, strips of 5 were sent). The UPU sent on strips of 3 to the receiving authorities, (i.e.: the members).”

What then of specimen Jubilee blocks of four, (of which many of us have seen examples and some even have certified examples). John said: “I would really wonder about a block of 4 Jubilee specimen. My first reaction is 100% forgery! A block of 4 Jubilees (perforated specimen) could not have fitted into the perforating device.”

“Whether the strip was vertical or horizontal depends on the sheet format. The sheets were torn apart into strips of 3 stamps making best use of the sheet before being perforated SPECIMEN. So in general only the required number were SPECIMENised.”

He adds: “There was effective destruction of many of the specimens at the archive level. I am working on a short article on the rarity of specimen stamps due to various destructive events. I think specimens are really rarer than the catalogue prices indicate.”

John can recognise the work of ten different forgers of the type D21 specimen, adding that “...some forgeries are so good that you would not be able to detect them from most scans.”

Many years ago, a quantity of forged specimen sets, using the De La Rue pattern, appeared at auction in the Wirral – (see article: [Prize-less Specimens](#)). Our Stop Press reports a new similar occurrence on eBay (see Home page).

Less serious contenders also  
make an appearance from time  
to time.

Recently, these two Grenada  
overprints came up on an eBay  
auction.

John comments on the  
“Grenada confection” as  
follows: “Had the Grenada  
Silver Jubilee issue been printed  
by Messrs John Bull and Son

then the illustrated overprint specimen might be appropriate.”



Forged Jubilee specimens aren't limited to the Windsor Castle series. John continues: “As a general rule Australian Kangaroo and later high values overprinted specimen were used by the Aus GPO to make up collector sets. The lower values being CTO the high values stamped specimen (I am pretty sure the HV were sold in this condition at a much lower price). So a specimen is not a UPU specimen so to speak.”

“Australian UPU distribution specimens up to 1935 were not stamped or perforated specimen but were cancelled with the GPO Melbourne datestamp. Thus should you find a stamp with a receiving authority mark it must also be CTO'd with appropriate date (prior to the issue date in SG I would suspect) as stated. After 1935 stamps were distributed to UPU in unused condition and therefore would not be recognisable without a RA (Receiving Authority) mark.”



John commented: “...pretty sure that this must be a crude John Bull confection. It is before the date when neat specimens were supplied to HVs for collectors by the stamp bureau, and it is too crude for a printer's specimen.”

And on the two GB examples, he said: “The specimen o/p on the Jubilees is a close approximation to type 23 but a bit too crude. I fear these may not be good.”

