



THE STAMP GROUP

Philatelists & Auctioneers



**A free guide
how to value your
stamp collection**

How much are my stamps worth?

**All the answers and
everything you need to know**

The first postage stamp was issued in 1840 in England by Queen Victoria and since then stamp collecting has become a huge international hobby.

Thousands of stamps are produced every year from over 300 countries making stamp collecting one of the most diverse hobbies in the world.

But how do you value a stamp collection? That collection found in the attic clearout, a grandparent or spouse who has passed away and left it to you, or you could be a collector yourself wanting to value and sell your own stamp or cover collection.

Here are some facts about selling and valuing your stamps.

Many collections are formed in older times from stamps torn off envelopes, or bought in small packets from a stamp shop or charity shop. These are then arranged into books in country order.

Stamps are produced with gum to affix to the envelope and are then postmarked to cancel the stamp. These were soaked off the envelope and put into albums, some albums would have only a few stamps, some run into the thousands.

These type of 'junior' collections are rarely worth anything as they contain common stamps that every collector can easily buy for small sums of money in large quantities.



1840 penny black - *the worlds first postage stamp*

Is a stamp more valuable mint (with gum) or used (with a postmark)?

As a general rule there is no single answer to this question. Some stamps are worth more with gum, some are worth more with a postmark, the value of your stamps depends on condition (the finer the better), supply (how easy is it to find the stamp offered), and demand (how popular the country, stamp reign or stamp issue is). The stamp market fluctuates like any other market so items purchased in the boom of 1980 for huge prices may only be worth half that amount now.

Many collectors purchased special event albums such as a Royal Wedding and many of these collections were sold at great premiums, which now, unfortunately, are only worth a fraction of the original cost of hundreds or even thousands of pounds that collectors paid for them.

You will find that if the collector spent money on their stamp collection then you will probably get a return on their purchases. If the collector collected for enjoyment from packets of common stamps then the stamps will not be worth very much. Sometimes you will find original invoices or auction catalogues showing what the collector purchased, this may help you finding out what the collection is worth.

Condition: Stamps should be stored in a dry place away from humidity and moisture, if a collection has been exposed to extreme temperatures then this will affect the condition and the value. If a stamp has tears or creases or a heavy postmark this will determine a much lower value or no value. Gummed stamps can be mounted (gum is hinged on the back) or unmounted (as issued by the post office), stamps that are unmounted are worth more.

Stamps still on the original envelope can be worth more as it tells the story of the journey. Some envelopes were marked with different postmarks or instructions, keeping the stamp on the envelope may increase its value, providing it is in good condition.

*Wreck cover salvaged
from SS Cairo in 1905*



Stamps of Great Britain: Many collectors enjoy collecting First Day covers of commemorative or definitive (Queen's head) issues from Royal Mail, most covers after the 1950s are worth very little, normally handwritten addresses are worth less, earlier covers are worth more, very modern 1990s onwards can be worth more just because of their higher face values or a special non-bureau postmark.

Gummed stamps of Great Britain after decimalisation in 1971 are normally used for postage, so collections or accumulations of gummed stamps are usually worth less than their face value as little as 50-60%. Used stamps for this period are not worth a great deal.

Catalogue values: If you have an idea of the value from a stamp catalogue this can give you an indication of whether the collection is worth selling or not. Many common stamps in a larger quantity in an album or box would not add up to anything of value, as a common stamp in one or 1 million of the same would not be of interest to a serious collector.

Catalogue values are an indication but not a actual market value. Many catalogue publishers will sell you the stamp at the price listed, but many auctions, dealers and traders will sell you the same stamp at a much lower price maybe between 10% & 50% of the published values. These are the true market values, not a made up priced catalogue. Remember catalogue publishers carry huge stocks and need to make a big profit so you would be very unlikely to sell your stamps to them at their own retail prices.

To obtain a professional appraisal you need to ask the opinion of an experienced collector or dealer. They will look at amongst other things, the catalogue value, the retail value, the condition, how it is housed in albums or stockbooks, the auction value at today's market prices. A dealer can also give valuations for Insurance or probate and will usually charge a fee for doing this.

*Common
First Day Cover*



You can ask yourself the following questions to ascertain whether you may have something of real value or if the stamps have little value.

Does the album or collection span the world with two or three pages per country?

This is a typical 'schoolboy' or 'junior' starter album that will usually contain low value stamps that have been acquired cheaply. Even if the album is at least 60-70 years old then you are unlikely to have anything of value.

Are most of the stamps large multi-coloured possibly with themes?

If they are, they will have been issued over the past 50 years and are highly likely to be worth very little, particularly if hinged in a worldwide album.

Is it a collection of stamps on envelopes?

Again, the same rules apply as above. The stamps are likely to have been issued over the past 50 years and will probably be First Day Covers. Even in volumes, don't expect too much value to be found amongst these envelopes.

Does the collection follow a topical theme e.g. cats, flowers, space, etc?

Not a great sign for investment value unfortunately. The likelihood is that the majority of stamps will be low value commemoratives or appendix issue stamps with little resale worth.

*Common stamps
in an album*



Does the collection span the first 100 years of philately?

Stamps from 1840 to 1940 could be of interest. The stamps will be single or two colours only. The earlier the album, the higher the value is likely to be, particularly if the collection is pre 20th century, but this is no guarantee of worth.

Does the collection focus on just one country or is specialised in a particular area?

This could be good news. Specialised albums where the collector has focused on building up a comprehensive study of a particular country, era or reign are likely to have more value in them than most. Single country collections of more recent stamps may still hold value but it is the earlier ones where the most value is to be found.

Does the album have a space for each stamp to be placed?

If the number of spaces filled is small then you're probably looking at a low value collection. It's always the easiest, least expensive stamps that get into the album first. If, on the other hand, the album is full of earlier stamps and is bulging with most spaces filled you may just have something of real value.

What is in demand at the moment?

Supply and demand of the philatelic market changes all the time but in essence stamps from reigns of Queen Victoria to George VI with a face value of 5/- or above in fine condition and in complete sets are always in demand. Countries like China and Great Britain are very strong but we have collectors for most countries of the world requiring better single stamps and collections and huge house sized accumulations in boxes and albums.

But, please be aware this is a generalisation you think you have something of value please contact our auction team.