

Monte Bello Islands

Local Post Stamps

In the period 1951-52 Great Britain carried out a number of atomic tests on the grounds of the Monte Bello Islands, located off the Western Australian coast approximately 150 km north-west of Onslow. The first atomic tests were carried out on 3rd October 1952 and this was code named 'Hurricane'. Forces personnel were deployed intermittently in the area from October 1950 to December 1952. There was an RAAF courier service between Pearce and Onslow from April to mid-October 1952 and MMA ran special Perth to Onslow flights between June and September 1952. The *HAWKESBURY* carried mails between Onslow and headquarters. The Joint Services Training Unit left the Monte Bello's on 16th December 1952 and the RAN then undertook periodic patrols.

Collectors first became aware of three values, 1d., 3d. and 6d. when an unknown London stamp dealer offered quantities for sale at the time of the first British test at the Monte Bello Islands in 1952. The provenance of these labels has not been determined. It has been said that they were produced by a naval officer in 1951 and probably printed in Perth. Subsequent hearsay evidence however, indicates that they were produced at the Weapons Research Establishment at Salisbury in South Australia. The stamp dealer also claimed that these labels were used on a local post service between the Monte Bello Islands and Perth during the atomic tests. No evidence was produced to support this claim nor do any covers exist.

The One Penny was printed in sheets of 24 (4 row of 6) and the Threepence printed in sheets of 25 (5 rows of 5). Printing details are not available for the very scarce Sixpence yellow value. Imitation reprints were made of the One Penny values in the 1990's and various phantom issues were also produced, some with surcharges or overprinted for special events and advertising.



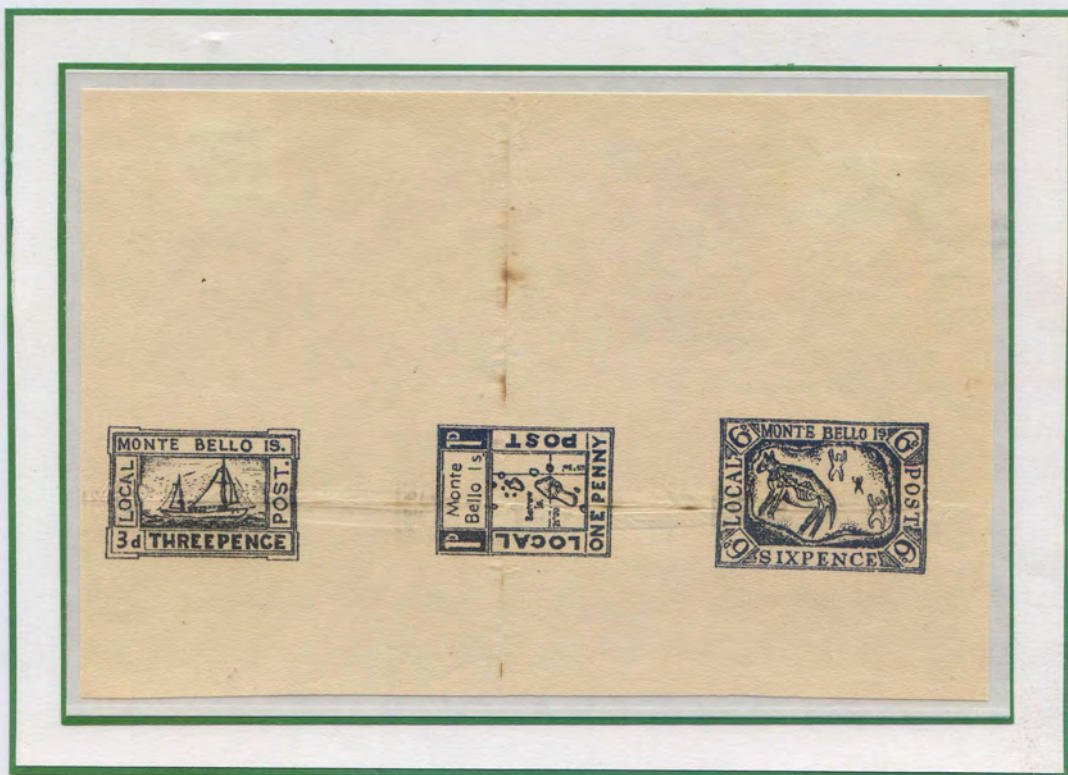
Map of the Monte Bello Islands in relation to the northwest of Western Australia

Research:

- Hornadge, B. (1982). Local Stamps of Australia. Review Publications.
- Hornadge, B. (1996). Cinderella Stamps, Issue No.12 Retail List.
- Haynes & Pope. (1997). Western Australia, The Forces, Prisoner of War and Censor Mail. WA Study Group.
- Pope, B. & DiBiase, J. (2000). More Monte Bello Islands Cinderellas, Black Swan, Vol 10 No.2.

Monte Bello Islands, 1951

Local Post Proof Sheet



Proof sheet in black of the three denominations in the series

One Penny
Threepence
Sixpence

Map of the Monte Bello Islands
Sailing Ship
Aboriginal Rock Art

Note: The only such piece recorded (ex Hornadge)

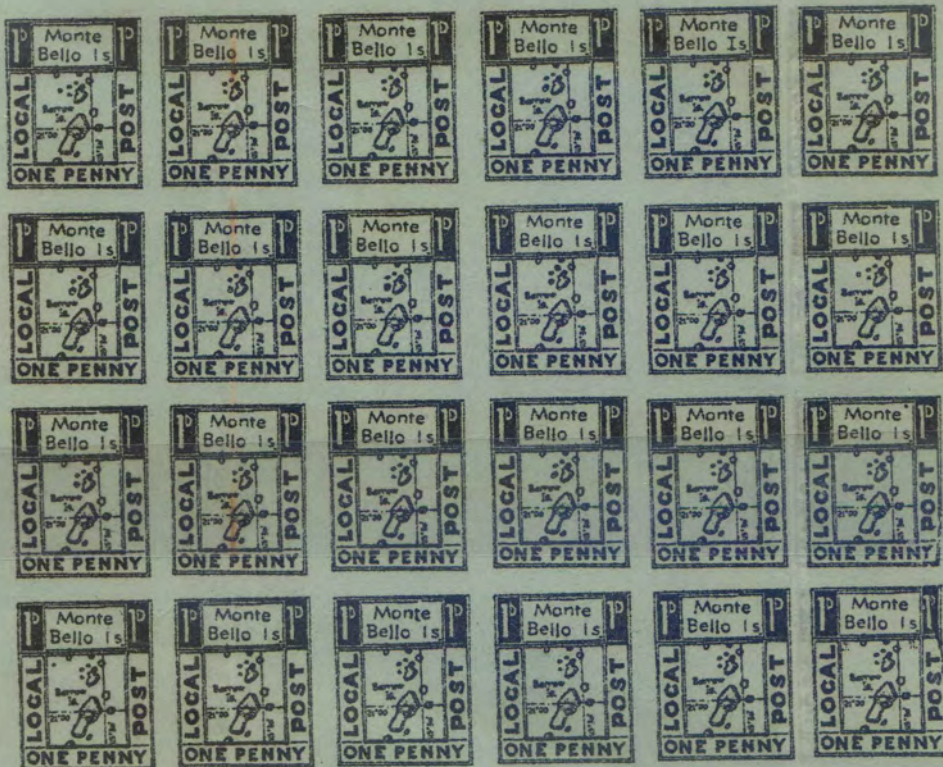
One Penny Local Post, 1952

Complete Sheet of 24

4 horizontal rows of 6 stamps = 24 stamps

Sheet overall size: 165mm deep x 170mm wide

Design size: 113mm deep x 135mm wide



1-1952

Note: 1952 inscription bottom right lower corner.

Damaged right frame: R 3/6 and R/4/6

(Positions: 18 and 24)

Note: The only full sheet recorded (ex Hornadge)

Monte Bello Local – The First Issue, 1952

One Penny Imperforate

Lithographed black on coarse green gummed stock



Map of Monte Bello Islands

Also showing Barrow Island at 21 degrees latitude and 115½ degrees longitude



Positions

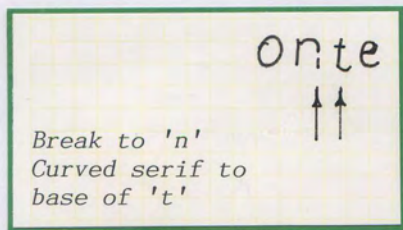
3 : 4
9 : 10

Block of 4 showing constant variety, break in frame above 'te' of Monte, Pos. 3 (top left in block)
This variety proves that the 1992 imitation (shown on page 14) was taken from this stamp. Other positions for this same variety are 12, 13, 17, 21. The stamp Pos.9 (directly below Pos. '3') with blob on centre bar of 'B' (Bello) proves that this block is from positions 3, 4 & 9, 10.

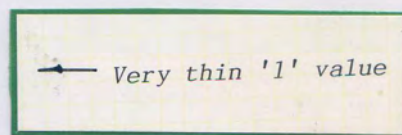
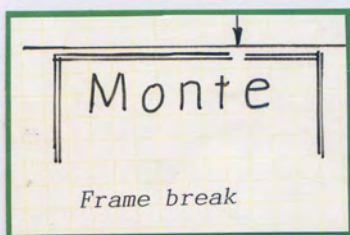


Very Rough Perforation
(Production source not known)

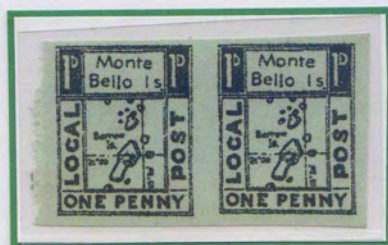
Plating Study – 1952 One Penny Local Post



Pos. 11 Row 2/5

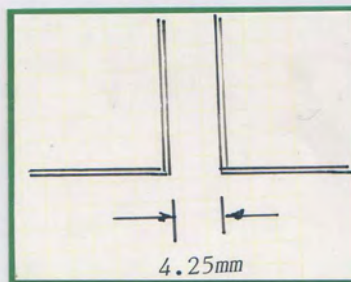
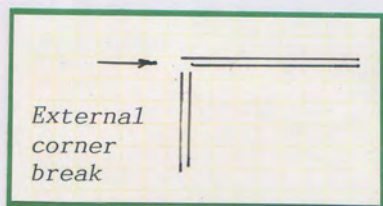


Pos. 13 Row 3/1



Pos. 15 Row 3/3

Pos. 16 Row 3/4



The gap between the 3rd and 4th vertical row is 4.25mm,
all other vertical margins vary between 3.0 to 3.75mm.

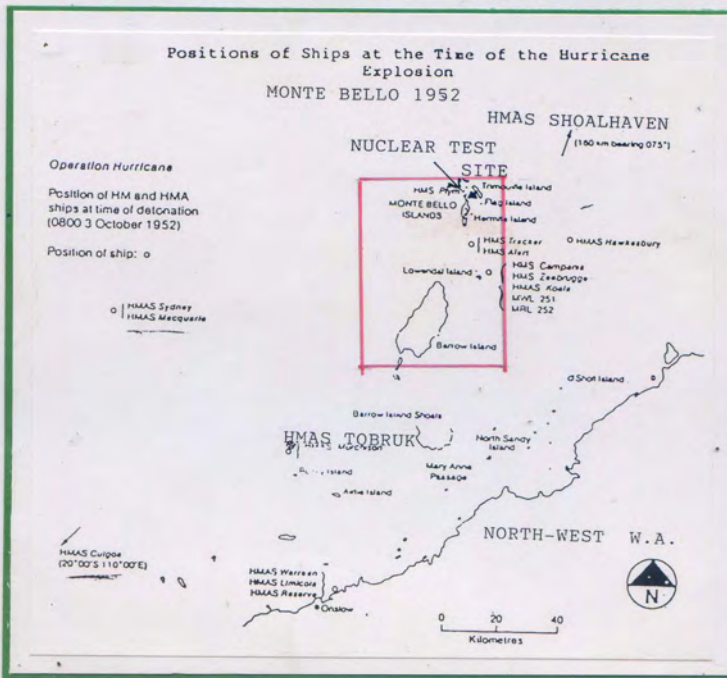
Monte Bello Nuclear Test Sites, 1952

Operation Hurricane

Positions of ships at time of detonation, 8.00am, 3rd October 1952



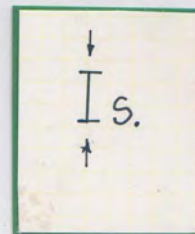
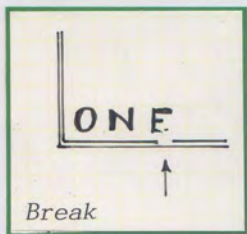
Reproduction of proof, One Penny Local Post



The atomic device was placed in the hull of the HMS *PLM*. Massive surface contamination occurred from the 2.7m underwater explosion.

Ref: Map reproduced from *Atomic Fallout*, Vol.1, No.10 June 1990

Note the similarity between the map and stamp design for the one penny value

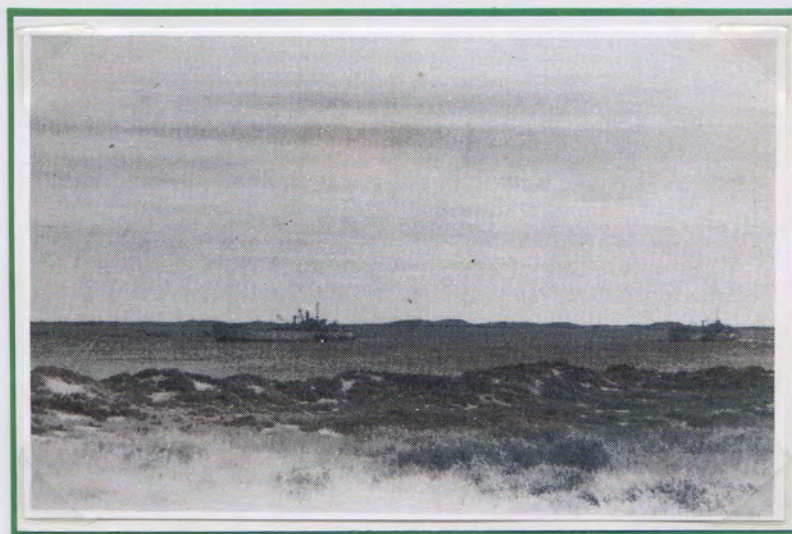


Printing error: I (with top & bottom serifs) to Island
 This is the only stamp in the sheet showing this variety (R 1/5, Position 5)

Threepence Local Post, 1952



Enlarged copy from proof sheet

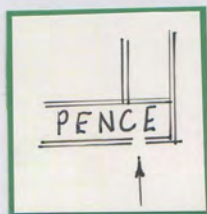


The Monte Bello lagoon where extensive surface contamination occurred from the 1952 atomic test.
(War ships in background) Ref: Photo from *ATOMIC FALLOUT* Vol 1 No 8, June 1988

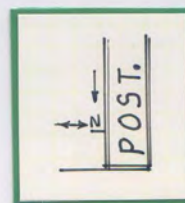
Lithographic Varieties



Pos.2, R 1/2
Hook to 'E'



Pos.9, R 2/4
Frame break



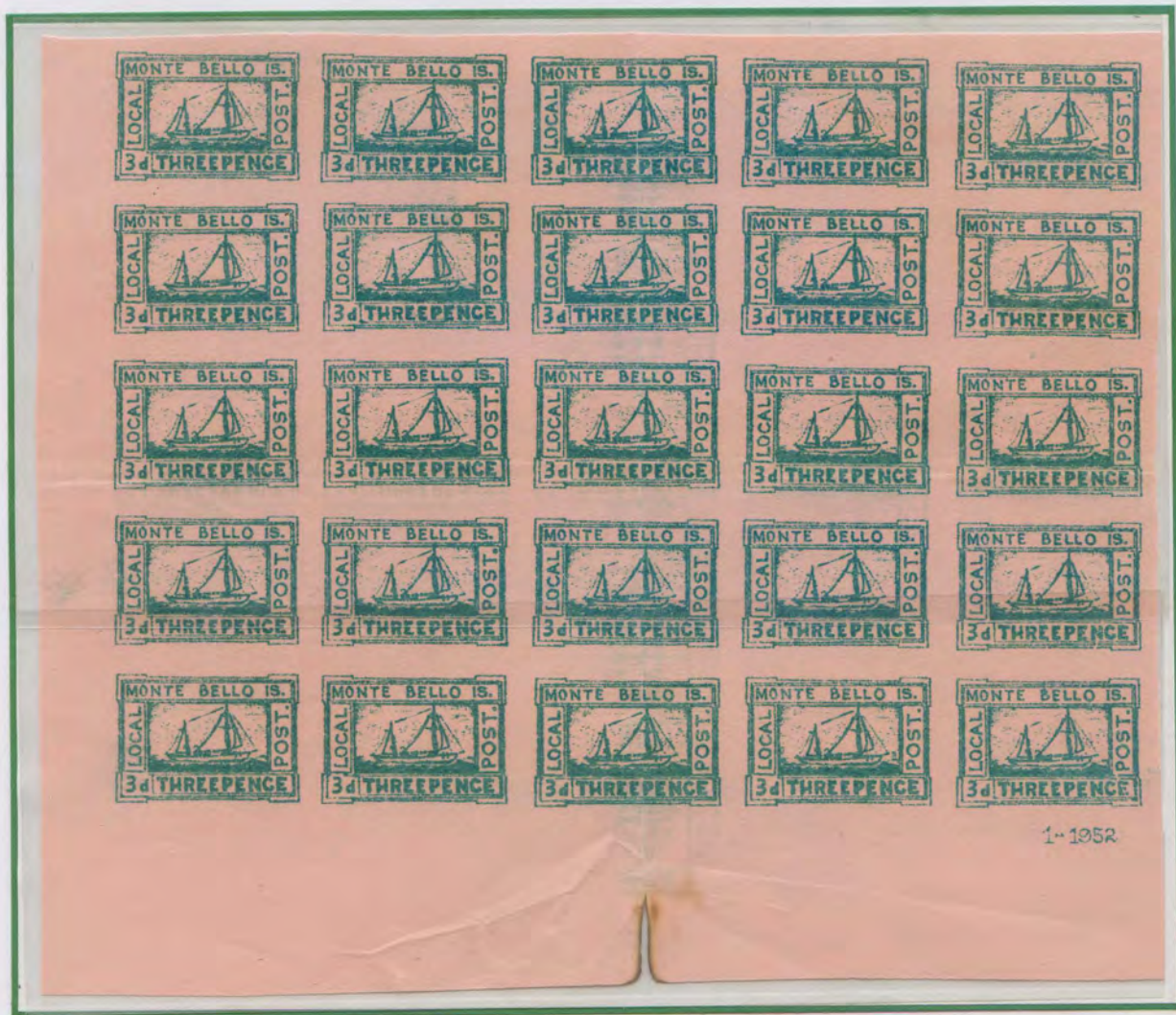
Pos. 24 R5/4
Secret mark

Threepence Local Post, 1952

Complete Sheet of 25

3d. Green on Unwatermarked Gummed Paper Stock

5 horizontal rows of 5 stamps = 25 stamps
Sheet overall size: 150mm deep x 170mm wide
Design size: 118mm deep x 156mm wide



Note: 1952 inscription bottom right lower corner.

Lithograph variety: R.5/4 (Position: 24)

Double dot marks opposite 'OP' of POST

Note: The only full sheet recorded (ex Hornadge)

Local Post, 1952 Issue

Threepence Imperforate

Green on Pink Gummed Paper Stock

(Sailing Ship)



Position 24 R5/4

Secret marks opposite 'PO' of POST



Progressive breaks mast (very short guideline) lower to upper masts (R 1/5)

Positional block: 4,5 and 6,10

Sixpence Imperforate

Yellow on Buff Gummed Paper Stock



Aboriginal rock art of an animal

Sixpence Local Post, 1952

Imperforate

Unwatermarked Gummed Cream Paper

Tete Beche Pair



Olive-Yellow

The only tete beche pair recorded (ex Hornadge)

Normal Pair



Yellow on Cream Paper (20mm selvage)

Sheet construction not known for the sixpence value but probably 5 x 5 configuration similar to the threepence value

Sixpence Local Post, 1952

Colour and Inking, Lithographic Transfer Varieties

Aboriginal Rock Art



Yellow shades



Yellow – Olive shades

Lithograph Transfer Varieties



Parts of the design void due to application of inking transfer

Stamp 1. Diagonal void across animals head

Stamp 2. Top right-hand corner void

Stamp 3. Bottom left-hand corner void

Atomic Fallout Publication, June 1988

Monte Bello & Maralinga Ex-Servicemen's Association

**MARALINGA & MONTE BELLO
ATOMIC EX-SERVICEMEN'S
ASSOCIATION**

ATOMIC FALLOUT

Volume 1. No. 8

June, 1988

Registered by Australia Post —
Publication No. QAS4208

THE TRULY GREAT — VETERANS' RADIATION ASSOCIATION

The booklet is an appreciation to those who served at Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Monte Bello, Emu Field, Maralinga and the supporting group bases around Australia.



Monte Bello Islands - Modern Phantoms

41 Cents Red

20 July 1990

Roulette on Ungummed Paper



Pale red on off-white paper



Red on bright-white paper

For many years the 1952 Phantoms were the only philatelic items relating to the Monte Bello Islands. In 1990 a new series of modern phantoms appeared from the Monte Bello Island Postal Service Philatelic Bureau operating out of Brisbane, Queensland GPO Box number. The design was a direct copy of the One Penny value of the original 1952 series showing a map of the islands.

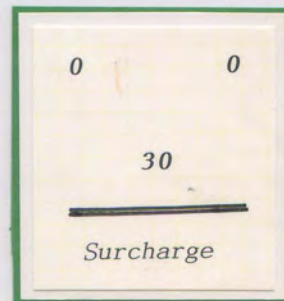
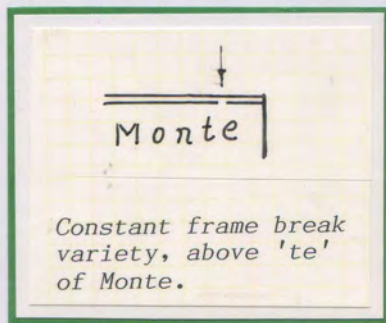
Modern Phantoms, 1992

Imitations of Original One Penny – Surcharges

Surcharged 30 cents in blue
Imperforate on ungummed blued paper



The 'ONE PENNY' in capital letters is obliterated with a blue bar and the '1d' in figures on each side of the top panel is obliterated with a blue circle (illustration shown below).



Each stamp shows the constant flaw as per illustration



Partial 'PERTH' postmark

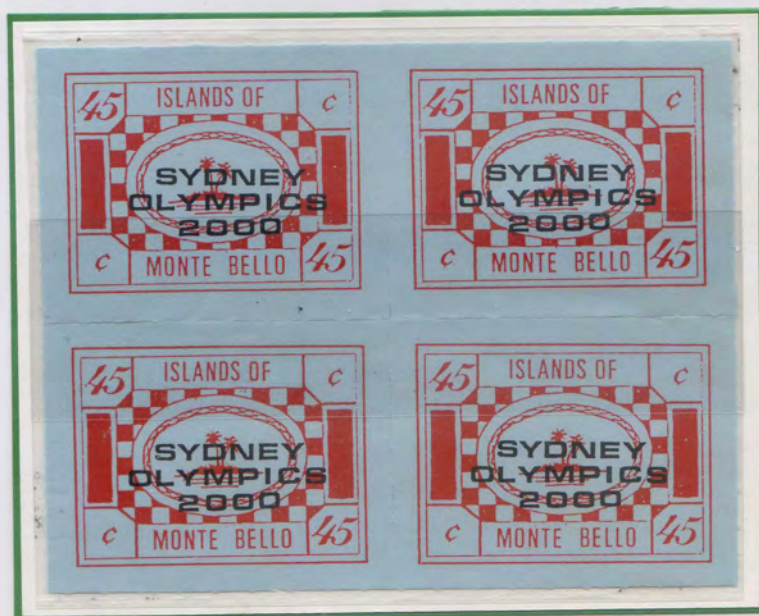
An imitation of the original one penny value of 1952 was released printed black on greenish-blue paper and surcharged 30 cents in blue on ungummed imperforate paper. The paper shows a distinct shade or tint of greenish-blue between the obverse and reverse sides of the stamps. Sheet size not known.

Modern Phantoms – Islands of Monte Bello, 1993

45 cents denomination printed on ungummed blued paper, roulette



Current Issue Overprinted in Black for Sydney Olympics 2000



Probably printed in sheets of 6 as per previous issues

Monte Bello Modern Phantoms, 1995

“No Nuclear Tests In The Pacific”

25th October 1995

Blue on Yellow Paper

No Watermark Ungummed

Label size = 40x30mm Overall sheet size = 210x147mm

Rouletted Sheet label size = 6



Reconstructed part sheet comprising block of 4 plus single

One dollar Monte Bello stamps with island scene and slogan “No Nuclear Tests In The Pacific”. This was issued in 1995 when protests at the French Nuclear Testing at Mururoa Atoll were at their peak.