

Bentine Gems phonecards investigation

After finding phonecards that had Japanese writing overprinted on them within my collection and not knowing the origin of them I began to investigate the details of them. This process has been difficult due to very little details being available or known about them. The only printed details I could locate was in the "Collect Phonecards of Australia 2nd Edition" by Michael R. Hudson and John Hall. That only shows the photo of two of the phonecards I have. See below extract from the book regarding these Bentine Gem phonecards.



The below phonecard appears to have been the first one that Bentine Gems did. It appears that it may have been done through Telecom Australia as the additional text box appears to be part of the card and not stuck onto the card. Also based on the below pictures of the phonecard there would appear to have had at least 500 produced.

1st example of the phonecard



2nd example of overprint (courtesy of fellow collector John Quick)



To see if I could find out more details about the Phonecards I had the text translated by a friend who spoke fluent Japanese. There translation of the Japanese on the echidna overprint is below.

Bentine Gems

Sydney office 02 (247) 8997

Melbourne office 03 (654) 5622

Gold Coast office 075 (38) 0913

Cairns office 070 (51) 0799

The next phonocard that I have from Bentine Gems is a generic overprint, which looks very much like one that Michael Hudson may have done for them as he produced several other overprints on the early telecom generic cards. However, after speaking to a keen phonocard collector who has seen these before it is believed these were produced by the Gold Coast store as a promotional phonocard and handed out to people visiting their store. The number that was printed is not known, but it appears that there was possibly a couple of hundred produced from the limited numbers that I have got images for.





The translation of the Japanese printed on the above card is.

Australia bought goods from a tax exemption store.

Bentine Gems

Sydney office 02-247-8997 Melbourne office 03-654-5622

Gold Coast office 075-38-0913 Cairns office 070-51-0799

After contacting several fellow collectors and the owner of the former Queensland office of Bentine Gems it appears that the first overprint was produced for the Sydney store as a promotion and handed out handed out to their Japanese customers. At the time that these phonecards were produced Bentine Gems had many Japanese customers, hence the reason for them being produced with Japanese text printed on the phonecards.

As well as the overprinted Australian phonecards they also had a phonocard done for use within Japan. This makes sense as they had a large Japanese customer base and it more than likely was used to either attract new customers or keep existing ones. This is the phonocard that was mentioned in the "Collect Phonecards of Australia 2nd Edition" by Michael R. Hudson and John Hall. There also appears to be little around about this phonocard. I was fortunate enough to get one of these to add to my collection recently and the photo of the one in my collection if below.



If you have any of these phonocards within your collection or know any more details. Please email me on bjgreen1@gmail.com any information/documentation that you have or photos of the front and back of the cards in your collection.

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