

Australia in Depth (Article #79)

By Simon Dunkerley © (13th Oct 2003; updated 9th Jan 2004)

Aspects of Philatelic Expertising - Part II

Following the introduction to this topic in the October edition of *Stamp News*, 'Expertising Part II' will include comments on a number of facets that are important to grapple with. These include the issues of gum, perfins, re-perforating and missing colours. As noted last month, these comments are all made based on the writer's experience and do not represent any expertising body. They are made in good faith, and you are encouraged to seek independent advice if unsure of any matters raised.

Areas to grapple with: Gum, Perfins and Reperforating

Gum

Many expertising bodies do not give opinions on gum other than stating whether the item is 'unused' or 'mint with part original gum', or words to similar effect. It is unfortunate that not many expertising bodies whose certificates are written in English will state 'mint never hinged' or words to that effect where that is the case. Given the demand and premium in price for such items, this is a real problem. The BPA does give an opinion on gum, whereas many other bodies do not.

On today's market, the status of the gum on a mint stamp is more important than it has ever been before in determining a stamp's value, and the writer believes that any expertising policy that precludes giving an opinion on the status of the gum is long outdated.

One argument that is sometimes used to avoid giving such opinions in this respect is that 'the gum may be genuine ... at the time of Expertising, but it may be hinged or otherwise altered later'. In reality, the same could be said about any other aspect of condition. It must always be taken as read that the opinion expressed is for the item *at the time* that it was submitted and expertised. To assume anything else is ludicrous. This can also be one reason why it is worthwhile to consider updating a (very) old certificate.

As the status of the gum is a very important component of a mint stamp, the writer's view is that if an expertising body doesn't have the expertise or confidence to state an opinion on the gum, then they should either find it or stop expertising those stamps. This is a serious issue that needs to be fully addressed as the status of the gum is a vital component of clarifying the condition of an item (part 3 of why certification might be required on an item).

Perfins

Perf 'OS', private perfins, double perfs and the like present significant problems in our being certain of their status. It is no secret that technology allows those with the skills and equipment to make dangerous fakes of items that might be worth *many times* the price of the *normal* item. It is generally accepted that many of the high value, and even some of the lower value Australian officials offered over the last twenty-five or so years are not genuine. Some of these have also been on regummed stamps – sometimes poor jobs that can even be detected from the *front* of the stamp. The writer's experience has been that in such cases, the perfin is almost certainly a fake every

time. Some of these regummed stamps have even carried recognised certificates that are almost certainly incorrect. At the same time, there are genuine examples of most 'OS' perfins, including the rarities, so not all of the examples on the market are fakes. The Royal collection includes first watermark perf large 'OS' to £2 in mint blocks of four that were a presentation set. Along with the archival records, this proves that all of the denominations existed with that perfin. The same is not true of the small 'OS', where there is some doubt as to the status of the first watermark 5/-, any example of which should be treated with extreme caution.

In 1988 the writer sold a mint example of the first watermark 10/- grey and pink as a *normal* stamp at a show in Sydney. Subsequently, this exact stamp was offered to an interstate dealer as a large 'OS' *official*. It was proven to be a fake at an ASDA executive meeting via a photograph from a catalogue that matched up with the photocopy of the subsequently perforated example. Caution is needed as fakes certainly do exist.

It is also important to recognise that certain officials, *particularly in mint condition* were *seldom if ever seen* on the market prior to the late 1970's. The writer is of the belief that the majority of such examples offered since then are not genuine. Such items include the following, in *mint* condition particularly unless otherwise noted:

- (1) Mint: Kangaroo 1st wmk 2½d small 'OS' in particular, 4d and 5d small 'OS', 5/- small 'OS' (in any condition); 2nd wmk 9d, 1/- and 2/-; 3rd wmk *10/- grey and pink and £1 grey in mint hinged condition; Small multiple wmk 10/- and £2 (both in any condition).
- (2) Mint KGV 4d lemon-yellow; No watermark 1d and 1½d; Small multiple wmk perf 14 ½d (in any condition), 2d, 4½d and 1/4d (in any condition). Perf 13½x12½ 4½d die I and 1/4d.
- (3) Commemorative Plate number and imprint blocks: 1½d Canberra, 3d Air Mail, 1½d WA Centenary, 1½d and 3d Sturt.

*The 3rd wmk 10/- and £1 grey are unusual cases, as mint examples were always very rare until the Australia Post 'Archival Sales' held in 1986 and 1987. In those sales, a total of 95 mint unhinged examples of the 10/- were sold, including an imprint block of 10 and the extraordinary 'JBC' monogram block of 9. Likewise with the £1 grey, 22 mint unhinged including an imprint block, and 24 CTO were sold. In both cases, it is wise to be particularly cautious of hinged examples, as these would not be from the 'Archival' sales. Many of the items offered in these sales were illustrated and can easily be identified from the photographs in the two catalogues.

As noted above, not all such items are fake; however, they certainly warrant special caution. It is also worth noting that mint examples are generally more difficult to be certain about; as compared to used examples, they do not offer the advantage of viewing how the postmark and holes relate to each other under either high magnification or a microscope.

In addition, it is believed that the second watermark 2½d Kangaroo was never perforated 'OS'. As such, any example offered must be of doubtful status at best.

Reperforating

Reperforating is also a problem, although I suspect that it is easy to get a bit carried

away and possibly label *everything* that doesn't look perfect as reperf. However, this is not always so.

Sometimes one or more of the perf pins were slightly bent, rendering those holes on the stamp a little higher or lower than usual. Expect the same variation at the top *and* bottom of such stamps; if that doesn't occur then more than likely there is a problem with the genuineness of the perforations.

The first watermark Kangaroos especially are seen from time to time as 'jumbo' stamps, and these examples usually look great, particularly if they are well centred. In such examples, the side perf holes are sometimes at least partially missing at the top and or base of the stamp. In these cases, the stamps above or below are often short and sometimes show relatively distorted corners that you wouldn't generally expect on a stamp perforated by the comb machine. This effect has been seen in blocks where such differences are apparent. The shorter stamps might at first appear to be horizontally reperf. at top or base, however, that is not always the case.

Some perf variations are also known on the KGV ½d green and 1d red, particularly in the early smooth and semi-surfaced papers of the latter, where a stamp might at first appear to be single-line perf when it is not. Whilst some examples of the single-line perforations are quite obvious from the shape and sharpness of the perforations, that is not always the case. In those instances where it is not clear, there is no substitute for measuring the size of the holes by comparing them with a stamp that is known to have been exclusively perforated by the comb machine, such as a 4d orange. Accordingly, all is not what it might first seem. It is also worth remembering that most of the KGV stamps that were perforated by the single-line machine are in distinctive shades. Once again, caution is needed; together with a bit of common sense!

Likewise, the issue of stamps that appear to be imperforate at base or on one side require common sense. As examples of jumped perforations rather than true imperforates are possible, the margin in question should always be wide enough to prove that the stamp is imperforate. That will preferably require a margin at least close to being as wide as the normal sheet margin for that position in the plate. Otherwise it is not possible to verify the item as being a truly imperforate error.

Typical examples where this is an issue include the KGV 1d red, 1½d Scarlet in small multiple watermark (both perforations), 1927 1½d Canberra, KGV definitives including the 3½d brown and 6½d brown, together with the QEII 7¢ purple. In each of these cases, jumped perforations that have been trimmed are known and a wide margin is essential in verifying a stamp as the genuine imperforate one side error. Examples with margins only a few perforations wide do not automatically qualify for a positive certificate of genuineness, although that has not always been the case, as a mint block of the KGV 1½d with a very narrow margin and an incorrect (old) certificate has been seen!

The mint example of the KGV 1d red imperforate at base, sold by Philatelics Australia, and reported for the first time in the October edition of *Stamp News* is the ideal format for this type of error. Many examples of this issue are known with jumped perforations that have been trimmed, pretending to be imperforate at base. The used block mentioned in the ACSC is the best of the previous known examples, yet it does not have a full margin at base. However, it is roughly torn with the margin below the equivalent level of the jubilee line in the illustration below. It is generally accepted that it is the only other genuine example of imperforate at base in the KGV 1d reds.



Recently discovered mint imperforate at base

Missing Colours

These make some people nervous, however, often unjustifiably so. The vast majority of mint missing colours offered present no real problems. As a general principle – if there is any doubt, then it almost certainly is not a genuine missing colour. An examination under ultra-violet light (UV), preferably with normal stamps for comparison will normally tell the story without too much difficulty.

Caution is needed when UV is used in respect to stamps that had more than one printing, or where different paper, ink or gum might have been used. These may well react differently under UV. A missing colour may only be found in one of the printings, so when making comparisons, it is essential to use normal stamps of the *same printing*, otherwise you are not comparing apples with apples, and an error of judgement might occur. An example of this is the 1970 5¢ Floral coil with yellow omitted, where the error comes from a relatively small printing that fluoresces quite differently to most of the normal stamps. Having seen two genuine examples of this error when auctioned in January 2002 (they were probably a pair originally), there was no doubt to the writer that the colour was a genuine omission, however, when one of these was submitted for expertisation, at first the UV reaction raised some concern. Further investigation including a full comparison with normal stamps from the *same printing* supported the genuineness of this, and presumably the second example (which was not expertised).

On the other hand, *used missing colours* generally require more caution and the writer believes that they should generally be assumed to have been faked, either by *intent* or *accident* until *proven otherwise*. Whilst mint examples also require caution, in order to retain the gum, there are fewer avenues for them to have been tampered with. The reality is that whilst they *all* warrant caution, the majority do not present any real problems in confirming their status. The number of different missing colours of which fakes have been seen is much smaller than many perceive.

False expectations – Over the years, the writer has been shown a number ‘possible missing colours’ that clearly are not correct. Experience has proven that such items have usually come to the ever hopeful owner very cheaply. In most cases you can expect to get what you pay for. If you buy a supposed known missing colour or an

unlisted possible missing colour from the back of a part time market stand holder's book or an exchange sheet for \$20, then you can reasonably expect it to not be genuine.

Many of the 1978 Aviators miniature sheets have been shown with what 'might' be missing the orange and pale yellow. It is estimated that five or six genuine examples of this error are known, and the majority of these are known to be held in long term collections. Yet the writer has seen probably a hundred or so '*possibles*' (better termed '*improbables*' or even '*imposters*') over the years. In every case, these possibles have been wrong, and are merely a 'partial fade', and usually a very ordinary imposter at best. This is a classic example of an item where the genuine error is very spectacular and is so clear cut that if *any* doubt is present at all, then it is clearly not the genuine missing colour.

Missing *gold* errors present some problems in that the colour can often be removed relatively easily, although signs of the removal are visible under UV and under a microscope. In addition, gold has a habit of turning green under certain conditions. This effect is known on most of the Australian stamps through to 1975 that include gold in the design. In some examples seen, the surface is sticky, whilst in others the green has fused through to the reverse of the stamp. In these and other cases, they are clearly not genuine.

The missing gold on the 1965 Christmas is another example where the genuine error is very spectacular and clear cut. Once again, if there is any doubt present, then it is not genuine. It is remarkable that in recent times, 6 of the 12 known strips showing this error have been on the market, comprising a block with four strips offered by Stanley Gibbons in Sydney; a strip offered by Rumsay in San Francisco, and a strip offered by Premier Philately in Belgrave. Anyone who has had the benefit of examining *any* of these will know what the genuine item looks like and should never make a mistake in this regard. As the gold was imposed *over* the black background and *over* the boundaries of other colours, the genuine error shows far more black than usual. In addition, the value is larger than normal, and the final design is slightly narrower than on normal stamps, as the gold printing went over the edges of the other colours. The writer was once sent a mint block of four of this stamp where the gold had turned into a sticky green! Unfortunately, the owner would not accept that it was a changeling.

The fully missing red on the 1964 Christmas is probably the most commonly presented used missing colour of Australia. The genuine error is very rare, with one mint and about four genuine used examples recorded. This is an example where a stamp presented as this error is wrong almost every time, and often dangerously so. Accordingly, it should only be purchased with a recognised certificate of authenticity, or an extension and guarantee to that effect.

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Provenance, the so-called 'expertising markings' sometimes seen on stamps, extensions as they apply to buying at auction in particular, and other aspects will be covered in Part III of this series next month.

