

# Australia in Depth (Article #77)

## By Simon Dunkerley (3rd August 2003)

### KGV Watermark Inverted Rarities

The popularity of watermark errors, both inverted and sideways was strong from the early days of collecting Australian Commonwealth stamps, as evidenced by catalogue values and prices achieved compared to normal stamps in the first editions of the *Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue* (ACSC). This interest continues to grow today. The aim of this article is to update readers of *Stamp News* with information that has come to light since this area was last explored by *Australia in Depth* in June 1998.

Illustrated below is the most recent example of the rare KGV watermark inverted errors offered on the market.



1923 Single watermark inverted 1½d green - three known, of which one has a slight fault. This fine example recently sold for a total price of \$14,150 against a catalogue value of \$3500 in the ACSC KGV volume, most recently published in early 2001. The Stanley Gibbons (SG) value is £1400 (also \$A3500 at the time of writing) in the 2003 edition of the British Commonwealth catalogue.

Many of Australia's rarest watermark inverted errors are to be found in the KGV series, and each of the four different watermarks contributes to the list of items, which are tabulated below. This is a complete list of those catalogued where a total of *ten or less* examples in private hands are known either mint or used.

The first number recorded for each item in the table is based on the figures given in the 2001 edition of the ACSC KGV Section. In addition, some *newly discovered* examples have come to light since then. These are indicated in ( ). Unless otherwise mentioned, all items listed are in used condition. In addition, the single watermark 1d violet and 4½d violet are *only* recorded perf "OS".

Watermark	Issue	Number known	ACSC 2001	ACSC 1994	ACSC 1990	ACSC 1988	ACSC 1980	ACSC 1975	ACSC 1970	Comments
Single	1d Carmine-red single line perf	2	4000	750	500	400	330	120	50	One has a small tear
	1d Violet	1	8000	-	-	-	-	-	-	Perf "OS" only (reported in 1996)
	1½d Green	3	3500	1500	400	250	350	150	60	One has a small corner fault
	2d Orange	4 (+ 1)	3500	1500	100	100	275	120	30	One creased
	2d Scarlet	1	4000	1500	25	20	17	400	125	Mint only
	2d Brown	1	8000	1500	250	250	-	-	-	

	4d Ultramarine ('Cooke' plate)	1	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mint only (see note below)
	4d Olive	3	3000	1500	350	350	350	180	35	
	4½d Violet	3 (+ 2)	3500	1250	1250	1250	800	600	100	All perf "OS"
Large Multiple	1d Carmine-pink	3	3500	1500	400	400	375	120	40	One on cover
	1d Green	2 (+ 2?)	4000	1500	-	-	300	250	50	A pair reported in 1927 has not been traced
Small Multiple Perf 14	3d Blue	2	3500	1500	200	200	300	120	30	
	1/4d Greenish-blue	4	3000	1500	375	375	600	350	75	Apparently only one Offered in 30 years
Small Multiple Perf 13½x12½	3d Blue, Die 2	7 (+1)	3000	1250	200	150	300	250	25	3 normal used, 'OS' 2 mint, 3 used. Price in table is for used
	4d Olive	4	3000	1500	400	300	450	300	60	Includes a pair with parcel cancel
	1/4d Greenish-blue	1	6000	2000	200	200	-	-	-	Has a small thin
CofA	3d Blue	4 (3 mint, 1 used)	3000	1500	200	100	250	150	25	One used with parcel cancel confirmed
	4d Olive	4	3000	1500	400	200	385	180	60	One with small tear
	5d Brown	5 (+ 3?)	3000	1250	400	375	225	180	30	
	1/4d Greenish-blue	4 (+ 1)	3000	1500	500	500	500	360	62	One with small tear

The 1d violet was first reported in 1996 and subsequently listed in the latest ACSC edition. The single watermark 2d brown and small multiple watermark perf 13½x12½ 1/4d were not listed in the ACSC catalogues until 1980. In addition, one mint example of the 4d ultramarine single watermark inverted printed from the Cooke plate was listed for the first time in the 2001 edition. This example has a proven variety from that plate and should not to be confused with the watermark inverted on stamps printed from the Harrison plates. The latter are rather plentiful in mint condition, although very scarce postally used.

The Large multiple watermark 1d green was listed but not priced in the 1988 and 1990 (update) catalogues.

In order to establish comparable price totals, the first four are deleted from the totals below, and a price of \$300 in 1988 and 1990 is assumed for the large multiple watermark 1d green. With these assumptions, the following table summarizes the aggregate value for the above years plus 1960 (£216) and 1965 (£216):

ACSC Volume	ACSC Value \$	Index value
	(Or equivalent for 1960/65)	(1960 = 100)
1960	432	100

1965	432	100
1970	857	198
1975	3830	887
1980	5807	1344
1988 (first fully revised edition since 1983)	5270	1220
1990 ('pen amendments')	6000	1389
1994 (no other edition in the 1990's)	22500	5208
2001	53500	12384

The *average nominal compounded returns* over the following periods give food for thought:-

Over the entire 1960-2001 period indexed above, the average annual return was 12.5%. As the prices remained static between 1960 and 1965, that figure increases to 14.3% pa for the shorter 1965 to 2001 period. Other interesting periods of comparison include the following:

1960-1980	13.9%	pa	–	quite	a	solid	move
1980-1990	0.3%	pa	–	barely	any	change	
1980-2001	11.2%	pa	–	quite	a	solid	move
1990-2001	22.0%	pa	–	a	very	solid	move
1990-1994	39.2%	pa	–	a	very	strong	move

1994-2001 13.2% pa – a solid move, however, not as much as might be perceived

The increases between 1960 and 1980 are a fair reflection of the overall market during that time, although on a proportionate basis, the rise in the late 1970's was less than that experienced by the basic stamps. During this period, most of the more specialised items were largely overlooked by all except the serious long term collector. However, it is interesting to note that unlike many of the basic stamps, which subsequently *fell* in price, the above prices, despite an uneven spread, held virtually even in nominal dollars through to 1990, showing an average rise of less than one percent per annum.

From 1990 through to 2001, the prices have all risen very solidly, averaging 22% per annum. Yet, quite spectacularly, the recent realisations for those in fine condition have generally averaged about three times the 2001 catalogue prices! When you look at how many are recorded, this illustrates how market forces operate in an area that is both popular and available in very limited numbers. The market now recognises this in spectacular fashion with many changing hands for multiples of the 2001 catalogue prices.

It is also worth noting that a number of the known examples are in less than perfect condition, and that generally speaking this has not been a hindrance in selling them. Recent articles have referred to the condition factor for rare items. If you are after a perfect example of some items, you may never find one, and many of these watermark inverted rarities fall into that category.

#### Recent examples of KGV Watermark inverted rarities sold

The following is a complete list of the examples that I know to have sold since 'Australia 99'. All of the prices quoted include the buyer's premium as appropriate.

#### Single watermark:

**1½d Green** (*Premier Philately*, July 2003). This example, illustrated above, fetched a total price of \$14,150 (plus GST of 10% if the buyer was an Australian resident). By way of comparison, the most recent example of this error offered prior to this that I am aware of was at a *Charles Leski* auction in June 1990, where the example with a small corner fault (not too bad) sold for a modest total price of \$471.50! I happened to be the under-bidder on that occasion, and in the same auction managed to secure one of the two confirmed used examples of the 1d green large multiple watermark inverted for a total price of only \$615. No doubt that would also sell for a sum well in excess of \$10,000 on the market today. It was sold shortly after the auction, and has not reappeared on the market since that time.

**2d Orange:** One example was sold privately for an undisclosed amount during the last two years.

**4½d violet:** Remarkably, no less than four different examples of this error have been offered at auction in the last four years, after none appear to have been offered during the preceding twenty-five years or so. The first two are believed to be among the original examples found; the third was a new find in 2001, whilst the fourth, cancelled at Thornberry rather than Preston as the other three are, appears to also be a relatively

new find.

- |  |                                       |                      |        |       |         |
|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--------|-------|---------|
| (1)  | <i>Status</i>                         | <i>International</i> | (April | 1999) | \$3,520 |
| (2)  | <i>Status</i>                         | <i>International</i> | (May   | 2000) | \$2,875 |
| (3)  | <i>Michael Eastick and Associates</i> |                      | (June  | 2001) | \$4,747 |
| (4) <i>Premier Philately</i> (January 2003) \$9,056 (in contrast to the others, this example is centred significantly towards the right) |                                       |                      |        |       |         |

**Small Multiple watermark (Perf 14)**  
**1/4d greenish-blue** (*Premier Philately*, January 2003) \$15,282. This example was previously acquired by the collector who owned it for a mere \$24 at a Harmers auction in the late 1960's!

**Small Multiple watermark (Perf 13½x12½)**  
**3d Die II perf 'OS' mint:** One recently found example was sold privately for an undisclosed amount.

**CofA Watermark**  
**5d Brown:**  
 (1) Sold privately for an undisclosed amount. This example has a couple of shortish perfs at top, and may be a new find  
 (2) *Stanley Gibbons* (Melbourne, October 2002) \$7,465  
 (3) *Premier Philately* (March 2003) pulled perf at left and believed to be a new find \$5,943

**Other items that may end up in a future update of the list of KGV watermark inverted rarities include genuine postally used examples of the following:**

(1) Large multiple watermark 1d deep carmine rose. Whilst a few mint sheets of this would have originally existed, most of these must have been discovered by early collectors. An imprint strip of four and several blocks of four are known. On the other hand, postally used examples have generally not been rated all that highly, although they are quite rare. My estimate is that about ten to fifteen or so such examples would exist. One example in a paler shade with more rose in it was recently auctioned. It shows different centring and perforations to that otherwise encountered, and is clearly from a different printing to all of the other recorded examples. It also shows the dot before '1' variety, and as such may warrant a separate listing in future ACSC editions.

(2) Small multiple watermark perf 13½x12½ 3d ultramarine Die 1. Until the 1970's this was recorded in used condition only, and was a rarity. However, at least three sheets were discovered, rendering mint examples relatively plentiful by comparison. They are all characterized by modest even toning on reverse. On the other hand, postally used examples are very rare, with perhaps three or four confirmed to date.

**Continuing demand and catalogue prices:**

With the continuing interest in varieties and errors, it is interesting to note the effect of Stanley Gibbons (SG) introducing the watermark inverted errors into the British Commonwealth catalogue. Whilst they listed them in the 'Australia Concise' catalogues published back in 1989 and 1991, they were only introduced into the standard edition of the British Commonwealth catalogue in more recent years. There is no doubt this has increased the demand from overseas collectors in particular, many of whom largely collect in accordance with these listings.

Perhaps even more importantly, with the release of the fully updated 1994 ACSC volume, and then the revised 2001 volume, the market now has a reliable guide as to how many of each item was recorded at the time of publication. Whilst the occasional new find is both exciting and to be expected, these numbers are very accurate and represent a valuable resource in assessing the relative rarity and value of these items. It is trusted that this update assists readers further in this regard.

With this information at hand and the recent realisations in the market place for such items, I would anticipate that the next editions of the SG and ACSC catalogues will show significant rises across the board, and relative rises in some of these items compared to others.

