

Australia in Depth Article #111

'Shades of the future' - Part 1

By Simon Dunkerley © 11th June 2006

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As **Rod Perry** rightly comments, there is no doubt that *postal history* will be a leading light of philately into the future, and I believe that it will only get stronger. There is a limited supply, each item is unique in some way in having a story all of its own.

There is no doubt that *proofs and essays* have seen significant and justified interest in recent years, and their importance should continue well into the future. Back in the 1960's and even the 1970's most of these items attracted little interest, and were often passed in when major collections were sold – the *Kilfoyle* sale in 1961, as previously reported in this column, being a classic example. Record breaking prices for such items in recent times demonstrate the current level of interest.

With regard to the actual stamps themselves, a number of facets have received significant attention in recent years.

(1) For the basic stamps in their own right, the trend has been towards quality and I believe this will continue. I do not believe we will experience the extraordinary price multipliers currently being seen in the United States, however, for certain items in truly superior condition, I believe there remains plenty of room for upward movement. By truly superior condition, I mean either the best or equal best of the examples known, or at least very close to that standard.

(2) Variations in *watermark*, such as *inverted* and *sideways*, which usually cannot be seen from the front of the stamp, have seen massive price rises in recent years. Although there is no doubt as to the rarity of many such items, only history will provide a definitive answer to the question as to whether the current high prices will hold up, increase or decrease.

(3) Variations in *perforation*, such as the rare KGV single line-perf ½d green, particularly in mint condition, the single-line perf 1d red die II both mint and used, together with the rarer perforations and compound perfs of the Australian Colonies, have mostly received significant interest and price rises in recent years. It is still my view that many of these items are under priced in the current market.

(4) The interest in *Plate flaws* has a long history and many of the rarer examples of these have gone from strength to strength in recent years, although I believe a number of these are yet to reach their true potential; particularly those that combine the important factors of beauty and rarity.

(5) Other printing *errors* such as *imperforates* and *missing colours* have done similarly, and whilst there have been significant price rises over the last decade or so, some of the classic errors still appear to be underpriced relative to comparable items from other countries, such as Great Britain in particular.

By comparison to most of the above, it is my belief that with the exception of a relatively small number of examples, variations in *shade*, which *usually* signify the different printings of a stamp, have not generally been given the full attention that they deserve. Some of the more popular and widely recognised shades are illustrated below in the *first* group of scans. In each case, these are striking variations from the normal printings of the stamp and with the combination of visual impact and rarity, generally command prices significantly above those of their *normal* counterparts.

It is important to recognise that the *reproduction* of the shades below may not show the true colour of the actual stamp. This is a perennial problem in illustrating *any* stamps, the result of which is of paramount importance when discussing rare shades. Accordingly, if you are not sure of the differences in shade and the other printing characteristics, there is no substitute for making actual comparisons with other examples of each stamp, or seeking expert assistance. In addition, with such items, if you are not sure, then it is wise to obtain a certificate of authenticity.



2nd Wmk Deep dull green



3rd Wmk Indigo-violet



CofA Wmk Dark grey and aniline pink



Salmon-eosin



Single Wmk Deep turquoise



Lemon-yellow with the 'line through value' variety



Large Multiple Wmk
Cooke Deep red



Ham first printing
1d Orange-vermilion



Deep dull blue

However, there are a number of other shade variations that are generally not yet recognised for what they are by the market. I believe that the interest in items such as these and other significant shade variations will grow in importance in the future. Each of the shades in the *second* group of scans below are not yet listed separately as such in the **ACSC**, yet they are significantly different from the listed shades to justify either a separate shade listing, or at least a special mention in a footnote. To a shade specialist they are of great interest.



On the 2nd Wmk 2/- thin paper the shade is always a very light brown



3rd Wmk 2/- an extreme example of the intense deep brown – could be named black-brown



3rd Wmk 10/- Grey and intense aniline pink – the extreme examples are a stunning shade



3rd Wmk £1 Light brown and pale dull blue



Single wmk 2d deep intense red – only seen perf 'OS'



No Wmk error in the deep golden-scarlet shade

The 3rd watermark 2/- illustrated above is a truly spectacular shade, of which I have only seen the one example. Unfortunately the illustration does not show the full depth of this stamp's colour. In real life it has to be seen to be believed, with an appearance that would justify being called *black-brown*.

It is interesting to note that some of these extreme shade variations have only been seen in conjunction with another variety, in most cases rare in their own right. In such instances, it is reasonable to assume that most of the corresponding portion of the printing were rejected by the printer for issue and subsequently destroyed. The £1 light brown and pale dull blue above being a case in point. The few examples of this shade seen all show a dry ink variety in conjunction with the double print of the frame plate, one albino. The **ACSC** states that at least two of these exist; the current count is about four. I have seen all of these and they are in the same shade and centred the same, giving rise to the possibility that only one sheet may have been issued.

The single watermark 2d deep intense red is a stunning shade, of which I have only seen four examples, all mint, with the same centring and perf 'OS'. Once again, this gives good reason to believe that only one sheet may have been issued. For the no watermark error in the 2d, I am aware of only one example in the deep golden-scarlet shade. During the last thirty years I have seen approximately *forty* examples of this error and with this exception, *all* are stamps that would fall within the normal range of the golden-scarlet shade.

In most of the above cases, and there are others, it is reasonable to assume that more were printed and that they were rejected for issue as they varied too much from what was accepted for issue; resulting in their destruction. If they are given separate listings in future editions of the **ACSC** their status will only rise, as I anticipate the interest in shades will generally.

In Part 2 of this article, to be printed in the September edition of *Stamp News*, I will have a more detailed examination of *some* of the issues and difficulties that arise in determining the shades of stamps, and also provide some direct comparisons of the variations in price that different shades can make, including some of those referred to above.

