

# Australia in Depth Article #112

## 'Shades of the future' - Part II

By Simon Dunkerley © 8th August 2006

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### 'An Introduction to the Problem of Colours and Shades'

Some years ago, I wrote a piece introducing some of the difficulties in determining shades. It is now time to update that report and take a more detailed look at some of the issues involved in this fascinating and sometimes rather difficult and controversial aspect of philately.

It is worthwhile to begin with the question '**Why are the colours or shades that stamps were printed in important to philatelists?**'

I see that there are *three* main reasons for this. Firstly, for many years, stamps of a particular denomination were required to be printed in a *specified colour*. So it is interesting to see how close the issued stamps conformed to those specifications. Secondly, philatelists are very interested in identifying the different *printings* of particular stamps, whether that relates to the same or different printers or plates, and whether they can be distinguished by differences in the paper, watermark, perforation, shades or varieties that occur in that printing, or any combination of these. Thirdly, stamps that might at first appear to be the same can vary considerably in *price*, depending on which shade they were printed in, based on the significance, visual impact, rarity and popularity of the variation.

Accordingly, shades are one of the key variations that provide scope for fascinating studies within Australian philately, and particularly for stamps issued up to the end of the Second World War.

The Oxford dictionary defines some of the key terms in the following manner:

**Colour** 'Sensation produced on eye by rays of decomposed light ... a particular hue, one, or any mixture, of the constituents into which light decomposes as in the spectrum ...'

**Hue** 'Colour, tint; variety of colour caused by admixture of another ...'

**Shade** 'Comparative darkness caused by interception of light rays ... a colour especially with regard to its depth or as distinguished from one nearly like it, gradation of colour ...'

It also refers to shades being a 'Slight difference, small amount ...' of variation from a particular colour. The reality is that for philatelists, variations in shade *can* be significantly striking in some cases and somewhat subtle in others.

In the Stanley Gibbons (**SG**) British Commonwealth catalogue (2006) introductory notes, the editor refers to shades in the following manner: 'Shades in philately refer to variations in the intensity of a colour or the presence of differing amounts of other colours. They are particularly significant when they can be linked to specific printings. In general, shades need to be quite marked to fall within the scope of this Catalogue ...' He goes on to say that in general, they choose a 'single applicable colour name which will indicate particular groups of outstanding shades'.

This is true in many cases, and even within the more detailed listings of the Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue (**ACSC**), there are generally more shade variations than those listed. To keep the listings to a manageable level, a group of different shades within a certain range are given one common name in many instances.

For example, the KGV smooth paper 1d pink **ACSC** 71T (formerly G28) refers to a group or range of shades meeting that description, varying from pale to bright. For many collectors, a single example from this shade group would suffice for their collection. However, a more serious specialist will desire to identify a number of shades within this group. For example, the specialised list produced for the sale of the *Colenso Blogg* collection of used 1d reds in 1939 included no less than fifteen variants of pink (G28) together with five variants of lilac-rose (28½) and eleven variants of carmine-pink (G29). This makes a total of thirty-one variations of what essentially are pink stamps. It is also a fact that the Blogg list was

not comprehensive, and that more shade variations than were listed can be identified by the more serious KGV 1d red enthusiasts!

Other terms used in the **ACSC** to provide coverage for a group of 1d red shades under one 'banner' include 'dull to deep', 'pale to deep', 'pinkish to reddish' and 'shades'. In each case where such a term is used, the editor has decided not to list each and every variation. Rather, those listed are considered to be the major groups, hence the 'G' number, with an indication that further variations exist. This also offers an invitation to the dedicated specialist who might like to study the shades further. Indeed there have been and continue to be many collectors who devote a significant portion of their lifetime philatelic research to the shades of the stamps they are interested in. In this regard, there is probably no better example in the world of philately than our very own KGV 1d reds.

### **Compound shade names**

In examining the name given to a particular shade, it is important to clarify that the final part is the dominant colour, with the first part referring to a variation from that. Accordingly, in the 3rd watermark Kangaroo 3d value, *yellow-olive* is a yellowish shade of olive, where olive is the dominant colour; whilst the 3d *olive-green* refers to an olive shade of green. Where more than one colour name is used in describing a shade, the convention is that the names should always be hyphenated.

For many issues, a precise definition of a particular shade is not a particularly important matter, as the total sum of those issued may have been produced in a small number of printings, or even one printing, with consistent ink and paper, resulting in stamps of the same colour or shade. On the other hand, many of the earlier issues in particular were produced as required from a number of printings, sometimes over an extended period of time. In most such cases, despite the efforts of the printer, the ink did not match those of previous printings, resulting in a wide variety of shades, within the one main colour group for that issue. This was particularly the case for much of the Colonies period, where printing methods were often rather crude. It was also the case for issues printed during the First World War, where numerous suppliers were used for the materials, making consistency a significant problem.

### **Significant differences**

The **ACSC** lists nine shades for the 4d orange and within each of these there are a number of variations. In one instance the shade is so different from the intended shade of the normal stamp that it is considered worthy of the status of a separate issue by collectors. The KGV 4d lemon-yellow is so different from the orange shades that it has a place of its own in even the most simplified of catalogues. It is a most attractive stamp and is very popular stamp for this reason. Illustrated below are examples of the line through value variety from the *Baillie* auction conducted by **Sotheby's** in the lemon-yellow and orange stamps.

Although the 4d orange and its variants do not have the scope of the 1d red in regard to shades, it is one value that still provides significant interest, together with a fair degree of controversy! Despite its significant characteristics, the *lemon-yellow* has long been a stamp that many misclassify. In some instances, a stamp from the pale *orange-yellow* group is incorrectly classified as *lemon-yellow*. In other instances, a true *lemon-yellow* stamp is misclassified as pale *orange-yellow*. This latter mistake is sometimes made by conservative philatelists who probably should know better, and has even been made by expert committees on a number of occasions, resulting in incorrect certificates being issued.

The controversy may emanate from an expectation by some that *all* lemon-yellow stamps should show the characteristics of what was given a separate listing as *lime-yellow* for the first time in the 2001 edition of the **ACSC** KGV volume. In the case of the latter, the **ACSC** sums up the characteristics well in that it displays '... a true 'citrus' quality, verging on a greenish tinge; when viewed against a black background the watermark shows through the design, the details of which are difficult to distinguish.' This is a rare shade variation either mint or used, and is one that I believe should only be acquired with a recognised certificate of genuineness, or at least an extension to obtain a certificate. If the above expectation was correct, there would be very few lemon-yellow stamps on the market, and that clearly is not the case.

An interesting aside to this is that true pale orange-yellow stamps are actually far scarcer in mint condition than their lemon-yellow counterparts, and in modern times they often fetch lower prices at auction. Although the lemon-yellow and more recently the lime-yellow variations have been the glamour shades, it has long been my view that *true* pale orange-yellow stamps are very under rated, and particularly so in mint condition. Indeed, an examination of the early editions of the **ACSC** shows that

the pale orange-yellow was catalogued at up to double the price of the lemon-yellow, and I believe rightly so.



Lemon-yellow



Orange

### Comparisons

When attempting to identify the shades of a *particular issue*, a physical comparison of a selection of stamps is very important. This is particularly the case where the differences in *other* printing characteristics are not sufficient to distinguish between the different printings without relying on the shade itself. If you have a collection or group that you believe have been correctly identified, that can be a good starting point. However, consistency between enthusiasts has and will remain an ongoing problem. As the **ACSC** notes, perceptions of people vary, and so do the names used for a particular shade. There really is no substitute for spending quality time and experimentation, using as much natural daylight, without direct sunlight as possible. Comparisons under an ultra-violet lamp can also be an important part of the process, and particularly so for the KGV 1d red shades.

Another problem is that the shades or colours across *different issues* are often given the same name, when quite significant differences are clearly evident. In an attempt to simplify things, catalogues persist in referring to quite different colours with the same name. The ½d Kangaroo, KGV ½d, 1d and 1½d, 3d Air Mail, 1/- Lyre-bird (large and small), 4d Koala, 5½d Peace and £2 Arms have all been described as 'green', yet if you put them beside each other, it is not too difficult to see significant differences! This can add to the confusion level of the uninitiated when it comes to classifying the different shades of a particular stamp. A similar problem exists with the differing names used between *different catalogues* for a particular issue or its variants. This makes life interesting when preparing a list with cross-referencing between the catalogues, and particularly so when they actually list different shade variations on top of that. The result can lead the inexperienced to make wrong assumptions about certain shades. My experience has been that in general if there is any doubt, then you probably do not have the rarer shade, as it is indeed rare. This factor alone means that from the outset the odds are against you, so it is far safer to assume that you do not have the rarer shade until it is *proven* to be genuine.

As noted above, for Australian Commonwealth, the variations in shade of the KGV 1d red are legendary. Many collectors have made a lifetime study of these shades, of which there are well over 400 different if you include a detailed study of the smooth and rough paper variations and the varying intensities and compounds from within the individual groups. I do not know of any other issue where the study of shades has quite the same scope or interest that has developed over the years since these stamps were first issued in 1914. In this issue more than any other, careful comparison is essential if the student is going to have a chance of understanding the different shades and how they relate to each other.

I vividly recall beginning an interest in the shades of this issue at the tender age of 11 after I had decided to collect the earlier issues rather than continue buying the new issues regularly put out by the Post Office. The 1970 Captain Cook set, together with the miniature sheet, the Post Office pack and the first day cover of each was the last set I bought as a new issue. On a limited budget, it was evident that to get a lot of stamps, I had to buy used bundles, and the KGV 1d reds seemed to offer the most

variation and interest. At that time I could get a bundle of 100 for fifty cents, or 10 of them for four dollars – that was 1,000 stamps!

In those days, *Rod Perry* was situated upstairs in Little Collins Street. He was one of the few dealers I came across that carried a wide stock of 1d reds based on the old **ACSC** 'G' number shade listings ('G' meaning group), and Rod was prepared to offer much needed assistance and time to a budding young school student on a limited budget. It was not long before I was attempting to sort them in accordance with the shade diagram used in the older versions of the **ACSC**. The chart showed the major shade groups heading towards purple as you move to the left and towards orange as you move to the right, and the intensity of shades moving from pale to deep as you move down. I found this a particularly useful tool in comparing the shades and relating individual stamps to each other. Before long I had two large white boards with thousands of stamps carefully placed in accordance with their shade groups. I am sure there were mistakes; however, it did wonders to get me on the right track.

As previously noted, whilst the comparison of similar KGV 1d red stamps in identifying shades in daylight is very important, another important factor is the reaction of the ink, and for some stamps the paper under ultra violet light (UV). The study of 1d reds under UV is quite an art form in itself. In addition, soaking in any kind of fluid can change the appearance of a stamp, and a heavy postmark, stains or toning can also distort the appearance of a colour. For used 1d reds, clear dates are also an important consideration in determining the shade groups that a particular stamp could possibly belong to. Factors such as these all need to be taken into account when assessing the shades of stamps.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Watermark £1 Grey – an example of significant differences in shade within one printing of a stamp**

In many instances, differences in shade signify different printings of the stamp; however, this is not always the case. Whilst one particular printing of a stamp may have produced stamps in a consistent shade, it is also true that there can be significant shade variations *within* the one printing of a stamp. For example, from the archival records, the third watermark £1 Grey stamps are all believed to have been produced from one printing, however, the stamps produced fall into two very different shade groups, of which there are variations within each. The **ACSC** lists this issue in shades of grey and deep grey. As the illustrations below show, the shades are very distinguishable. The grey stamps vary from a typical lighter grey to what could be termed silver-grey, whilst the deep grey stamps vary somewhat in intensity. An examination of many stamps over a long period of time has shown that the paper of the stamps in the grey shade is of a high quality, being highly surfaced, and with gum that appears thick and quite opaque. By comparison, the deep grey stamps are on a paper that is somewhat semi-surfaced, this being particularly evident in stamps that have been soaked; they also have a flatter more transparent gum. In addition, the paper of the grey stamps is very white, whilst that of the deep grey stamps is often slightly yellowish by comparison. More often than not the gum on the deep grey stamps is slightly yellowish, and this should not be confused with toning.



Grey



Deep grey

In a discussion with *Geoff Kellow*, the **ACSC** editor, his research of the archival records has confirmed that a total of 1996 sheets of 120 (supplied as 499 units of 480 and subsequently cut into the sheet size of 120) were delivered into stock at *the one time* for the printing of this stamp. There is *no* record of any other delivery of paper stock for the printing this stamp, so the fact that there were two distinct papers used would presumably mean that some of the paper allocation in that delivery came from a different *batch*. Of the 1996 sheets, there are entries for 1625 and 225 sheets respectively as they were completed and counted, with no distinction of any different printings; 90 were recorded as being perforated OS; 55 were recorded as being destroyed and one was presumably retained for a record of the printing; matching the total of 1996 sheets.

As evidenced by the known *imprint* pieces (all *HARRISON*), the guillotining of the lower margin was different for each of the two shades. Only one block and four pairs are recorded showing the *full* two-line imprint *and* a significant margin below it, with all of those that I have seen being in the grey shade. By comparison, there are at least five imprint blocks and about ten or so pairs with the margin *trimmed* either closely or into the lower line of imprint at base; I have seen most of these over the years, all of which are in the deep grey shade.

Interestingly, the *fluffy perms* that are often encountered in this issue are almost entirely restricted to stamps in the grey shade. Although it cannot be confirmed, I believe this may be evidence that the figure of 1625 sheets above could have been perforated on the actual day of the printing, and the balance on the next day. They were apparently having trouble with the perforating, which appears to have deteriorated through the day as it became more fluffy. Some repairs or alterations to the perforator would presumably have been made before the 225 sheets were perforated on the next day and entered into the records. It could also have been that the nature of the paper of the grey stamps did not respond well to the perforating generally. This is backed up by my observation that *other* third watermark stamps printed on this or very similar papers, including certain printings of each of the 3d olive die IIb, 6d ultramarine die IIb, 6d chestnut, 9d violet die IIb and the 2/- maroon in particular also resulted in characteristic fluffy perforations. In most other instances, where the stamps of these issues were printed on different papers, the fluffy perforations did not eventuate.

It is also worth noting that the *cancelled to order* stamps are almost, if not entirely always on stamps of the grey shade, as I have never seen a true cto example in the deep grey. The *perf* OS stamps are mostly in the grey shade, whilst the *SPECIMEN* overprints on this stamp fall neatly into the shade groups, with the rare type 'B' always on grey stamps, and the types 'C' and 'D' on deep grey stamps of varying intensities.

In this issue, the shades are fairly easy to identify, and the other characteristics as noted offer interesting and useful comparisons. This stamp provides a good demonstration that factors other than the colour can be useful in identifying shades of stamps from even within the same printing in some instances.

Finally, although both shades are listed at the same price in the **ACSC**, I believe the evidence is that stamps in the deep grey shade are somewhat scarcer than those in the grey, and particularly so in mint condition. In both instances, they are quite difficult to find well centred and with good perforations on four sides.

### **Price Comparisons**

A few examples of shade variations in what are essentially the same stamp that lead to significant variations in price are shown in the table below.

#### **Stanley Gibbons British Commonwealth Part 1 (2006 Edition)**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>SG Cat No.</b>	<b>MLH</b>	<b>FU</b>
Kangaroo 3rd wmk	2/- brown	41	£190	£13
	2/- red-brown (aniline)	41b	£750	£225
KGV Single wmk	4d orange	22	£27	£2.50
	4d lemon-yellow	22c	£70	£14
KGV Large Mult Wmk	1d carmine-pink	49	£150	£100
	1d deep red	49b	£2500	£1500

1d carmine	50	£35	£8
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In the current editions of the Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue (**ACSC**), the above variations are all listed, whilst at a more specialised level the following provide some additional examples of interest:

Issue	Description	ACSC Cat No.	MLH	FU
KGV Single wmk	1d pale terra-cotta	71Q (G25)	\$650	\$75
	1d salmon-eosin	71SA (G27)	\$6000	\$1000
	1d carmine-rose	71R (G30)	\$5	\$1
	1d lilac-rose	72KA	\$500	\$100
	1d orange-brown	72S	\$1200	\$400*
	5d chestnut	123A	\$35	\$20
	5d orange-brown	123C	\$35	\$6
KGV CofA wmk	5d black-brown	4123G	\$4000	\$3000
	1/4d blue	131A	\$65	\$8
	1/4d very deep turquoise	131E	\$1750	\$3000
1934 Victoria	2d vermilion	151A	\$1	
	2d very pale terra cotta	151B	\$40	

These illustrate well the importance of how shades can vary the price of stamps from within a particular issue. As I write this, the updated version of the **ACSC** KGV volume is nearing completion, and will certainly show some significant price increases for the items listed above. In this respect, genuine examples of the 1d rough paper *orange-brown* shade are normally seen only perf 'OS' and in used condition, and as such have recently been selling for approximately \$5000 compared to an **ACSC** (2001) price of only \$400! Importantly, this is a shade that is best acquired with a certificate of genuineness; particularly as this listing is not without its own controversy.

## What's In a Name?

### A matter of definition?

Sometimes the name given by early catalogue editors or collectors to a shade can cause confusion in an area where there is more than enough of that already. Modern catalogue editors are faced with the dilemma of a choice between maintaining a traditional name or changing the name, which might even add to the frustration of some collectors and dealers. However, if a name was suitably changed *and* was accompanied by a suitable description in a footnote, I believe that would go a long way in alleviating at least some the confusion that currently exists.

In the Kangaroo issues, the third watermark 2/- 'aniline red-brown' (**ACSC** 37F), the same as **SG** 41b in the table above, is a distinctive shade, both in its colour, in the 'oiliness' of the ink used and in other printing characteristics. However it is also the cause of much confusion to both collectors and dealers alike.

Firstly, it is not one exact shade; rather it is a *group* of shades that vary significantly both in the colour and in the degree of aniline showing. A significant problem with this stamp is that *some* apparently believe it should *always* be the same as the *extreme* and very distinctive shade of this stamp seen with the North West Pacific Islands (NWPI) overprint. However, the latter stamps were apparently rejected for general use in Australia and rather than being destroyed, were overprinted NWPI. When the stamps of this shade are soaked for too long, their colour starts to run and it severely stains the paper. It is also possible that the tropical conditions have changed the colour or influenced the aging process in these stamps.

In nearly thirty years of searching, I am yet to see *any* stamp without the overprint that is anything like the extreme shade of those that were overprinted. I cannot say that they don't exist; however, I am yet to be convinced that they do. In other words, if that were the standard for determining the authenticity of a stamp presented as aniline red-brown, then no example that I am aware of would have received a positive certificate, and that clearly is not the case. In my experience, the best examples of this shade

group that I have seen *without* the overprint are *always* perf 'OS', a further indication that they were rejected for general issue over the Post Office counter. However, it has to be noted that they certainly fall a fair way short both in terms of the shade and the amount of aniline present when compared to the extreme shade of the overprinted stamps. This is clearly a stamp that requires more work in defining how it should be categorised.

### **A misleading name?**

An example of a somewhat misleading shade name is the KGV Cooke printing of the 1d 'Deep red' on large multiple watermark paper. This shade refers to a group of stamps issued in January 1918 from a very small so-called experimental printing made by J. B. Cooke. This printing comprised two main parts, firstly those in the carmine-pink shade of which there are four main variations, and secondly those in the rose-red to deep red range, of which there are also variations, some of which have not generally been reported in the philatelic press – that will be the topic of a future article.

For stamps listed as 'deep red', the perception given by the name, or at least taken up by many, is that they are deeper than all other large multiple watermark stamps, the deepest of which is called 'deep carmine aniline'. However, some of the more common shades printed by T. S. Harrison and issued *from* December 1919, as well as the deep carmine aniline are in fact *significantly* deeper than even the deepest of the Cooke deep red stamps. The result is that misclassification by somewhat optimistic collectors, and most dealers alike, is pretty much the order of the day. This is certainly a stamp that I believe should only be purchased with a recognised certificate, or at least on an extension to obtain one. Anything less than that is fraught with danger. My advice here is simple; if the seller has any problems with this, then do not buy the stamp, as it will almost certainly prove to be incorrect! As genuine examples of this shade command a hefty price, perhaps I should go further and ask the question as to why anyone would want to sell one without a certificate.

In the large multiple watermark, the Cooke deep red is a genuinely rare stamp and it would be true that most collectors and indeed many dealers have *never* actually seen a genuine example. With a little bit of experience, one simple rule will go a long way in avoiding significant problems. By comparing a genuine Cooke deep red stamp with *any* of the stamps printed by Harrison, it can be seen that the former does not show the characteristic blueness that is evident in *all* of the latter issues and even the Cooke carmine-pink. This is best demonstrated and confirmed by the fact that if you place a genuine deep red stamp on top of a block or selection of *any* Harrison stamps, it will *always* show a very distinctive orange appearance by comparison. If there is any degree of uncertainty, this type of comparison can be very useful indeed. There are several other tests for the specialist such as the UV reaction; the higher quality of the paper; the clearer printing, and others; however my experience has been that this one is by far the most conclusive. The same rule is also true of the *rose-red* stamps printed by Cooke.

### **An interesting case**

The block of four, formerly from a booklet pane illustrated below was once offered in a postal bid sale as rough paper deep scarlet aniline (G60-61), of which I had plenty of examples in stock. As I quickly flicked through a series of lots my *immediate* impression when I stopped at it was that it was typical of this group. In about two seconds I felt it didn't look right, so rather than move on to the next lot I took it out to examine more closely. Unexpectedly, I quickly noted that despite its description and initial appearance, it was actually on *smooth* rather than *rough* paper, and this somewhat surprised me. So I took it out of its mount to look at in more detail and noted that the amount of aniline showing on the reverse was far less than these groups typically show and that the gum was also very different, being much flatter and thinner in appearance. It was certainly the gum of an earlier printing than *any* of the rough paper stamps. Having not seen how the illustration in the magazine will print at the time of writing, I anticipate that it will not show the true intensity of the real life colour of this block.

Some time after acquiring this block I showed it to several specialists and after spending considerable time with one collector who has studied the shades for longer than I have, including a detailed study under UV, concluded that it was a very intense and extreme example of the G17½ Deep red (aniline) shade, of which a portion were printed on semi-surfaced paper. In many years of study I had never seen such a deep example of this shade group, with other specialists agreeing that it was a most spectacular shade. Although the basic shade of this stamp is priced relatively low in the catalogue, such a stunning variation is worth considerably more. This is true of many of the 1d red shade groups, where what might generally be more common shades, can include some rare variations within a particular 'G' number. With many years of experience I have found that the vast majority of stamps fall reasonably neatly into one of the groups, however, occasionally a stamp causes problems in classification, providing a challenge for even the seasoned specialist. I remember spending many an hour studying the 1d red

shades with Alan White, the former **ACSC** editor, and it was not often that we had difficulty placing a shade and agreeing on its classification, although it certainly did happen on occasions. Some of these would have been due to colour changelings, where the stamp has been either intentionally or unintentionally altered in some way. In other cases they would either have been on the border between shade groups, or even an unlisted variation.



For those interested in pursuing their study of the 1d red shades beyond the scope of the **ACSC** listings, a superb reference book titled *The Readhead*, by *Colin Beech* was published by the British Society of Australian Philately (**BSAP**) in 1998, and provides an excellent study of the 1d red shades. If you would like a copy of this, the cost is \$46 plus postage.

## Conclusion

It is true that the classification of the shades of some, if not many stamps will continue to be a challenge, and I know of several instances where even respected expert committees have made mistakes. However, the whole field of shades is not all like this. It can be an interesting, exciting and rewarding area of philately.

In all cases where there is a significant price difference, you know that the more expensive variation is either scarce or rare; indeed it can be very rare. So, unless you have a sound reason to believe that what you have is the rarer version of the stamp, the reality is that you probably haven't got it. That aside, if you have any doubt, it is always worth taking the time to have your stamp checked out carefully by someone who is recognised in that area, and not just someone who 'thinks that it might be ok', or someone who claims to know more than they actually do. This certainly is an area where no one has all of the answers, and the learning process is a continuing one for everyone.

Yes, shades can be a difficult area, and some of these difficulties are not just going to disappear overnight; however, as with most things, if you seek reliable expert assistance, and with this in hand, put in time of your own, the more you should learn along the way. It has often been said that 'knowledge is power', and in the world of philately, there are few better examples of this than in the area of shades.

