

Australia in Depth Article #113 'KGV Single Wmk 1½d Scarlet Two spectacular items come to light'

By Simon Dunkerley © 5th September 2006

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One of the great joys of being immersed in the philatelic market is that surprises are often just around the corner. Being fortunate to travel widely to attend auctions or visit exhibitions, I am often pleased to be able to examine, and indeed sometimes buy items that I once dreamed of owning as a schoolboy, or perhaps even better, come across a totally new discovery.

As I write this column, the last month has proven no exception, with some remarkable items coming to light, two of which are featured below.

Firstly, in the KGV single watermark 1½d scarlet, the only recorded example of an original pair showing unsurfaced ('rough') paper and surfaced (smooth) paper in *combination* is shown in figure 1. As with the 1½d green, the 1½d scarlet is listed in the Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue (**ACSC**) on 'very coarse mesh paper'. These were formerly called *rough* paper, however, as the **ACSC** footnote mentions, these should not be confused with the rough paper of the 1d red and the 5d bright chestnut. The term very coarse mesh paper is a better description for the 1½d stamps as it has a different character and appearance to the traditional rough papers of the other values. They are generally a little more subtle in that they are less visible from the front of the stamp particularly in mint examples, and when looked at to the light as if you were looking at the watermark, the vertical mesh or grain of the visible is significantly more apparent than usual. These can cause some problems in classification, and examples are often incorrectly offered. However, in the case of the left stamp in this pair, there is little subtlety, as the difference is highly visible. This is an extreme example of an unsurfaced paper, and it shows!



Figure 1

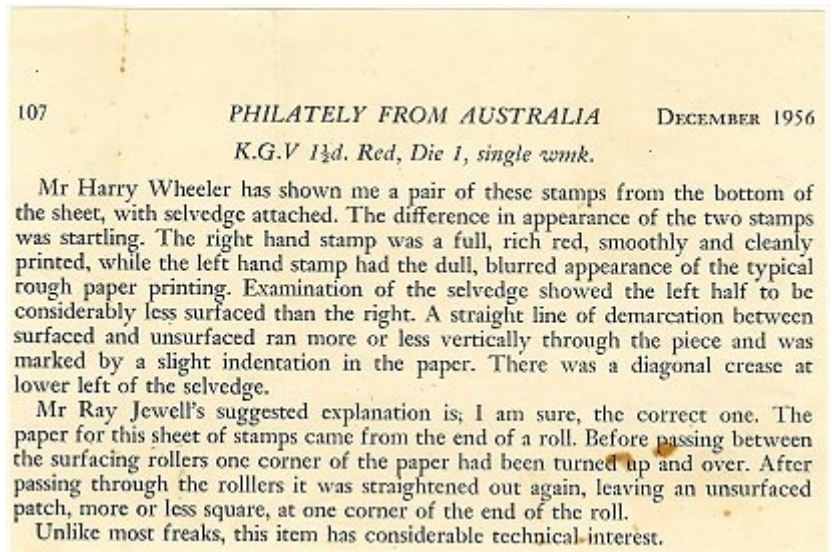


Figure 2

Apparently discovered in 1956, as shown in figure 2, this item was written up in *Philately from Australia*, the journal of the **Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria**. I first saw this item about thirty years ago, and was fascinated by it at the time. Having wondered where it might be residing several times over the years, it finally came to light recently when the owner decided to sell.

You might be asking 'how can such a variety occur?' At first glance, it might seem impossible; however, in the production stage of the paper, an error has occurred, possibly due to a fold in the paper as noted in the extract shown, although it could also possibly be due to a sudden stop in the surfacing of the paper during that stage of the process. This may have occurred in a similar way to many of the genuine missing colours in that the surfacing process was stopped abruptly for some reason, and then resumed with the slack being taken up, creating a gap in the surfacing of the paper. The fact that the lower margin at left has a fold may be evidence that the paper had turned, however, that cannot be verified, and there is no evidence of anything different or unusual on the reverse of the item.

In addition to the technical aspect as to how the variety may have occurred, what is remarkable is the degree to which the same ink has printed differently on the two stamps as a result of the difference in the paper. Except for a very small portion at the right edge where the surfacing commences, the left unit has printed very poorly with the ink not taking well to the paper. The right unit has printed both strongly and clearly together with a lot of depth to the colour. Casting our minds back to the study on shades, this is a perfect illustration of how the *same* ink can print very differently on different papers. Those with a strong interest in the shades of the KGV 1d red will be well aware that the same ink printed quite differently on the smooth and rough papers of that issue, resulting in stamps that look quite different to the eye.

As far as I am aware, this is the only known example of such a variety on *any* issue of Australian Commonwealth, making it an extremely rare and valuable item. Indeed, it may well be the only genuine example of such a variety on the stamps of *any* country! I am advised by **Geoff Kellow**, editor of the **ACSC** that it is going to be listed in the revised edition of the KGV volume, due to be published in the near future. It is important to note that this item carries a *recognised* certificate of authenticity. As no other such items are known, it is difficult to give a specific value to this item, suffice to say that it would indeed be significant.

The second item, of the same issue, is a wonderful example of the paper being folded over the corner *prior to printing*, meaning that a portion of the printing was made on the *reverse* (gummed side) of the paper. Until it recently came to light on the market, I was not aware of the existence of this item. In figure 3, the first illustration shows the position of the paper at the time of printing with the reverse flap folded over.



Figure 3

Somewhere along the line between the printing and perforating stages of the production process the folded corner was *unfolded*, so that the perforations were made in the *normal* position on the sheet and not also in the margin. The result of this was that varying portions of three units were printed on the *gummed side* of the paper and are also *totally imperforate*, as shown in figure 4. Once again, it is quite evident that being printed on paper with significant differences, the gummed side and the normal side, has resulted in a vastly different depth of colour and quality in the printing.



Figure 4



Figure 5

On the other hand, as shown in figure 5, the corresponding units were printed with *voids* of equally varying portions on the surface of the paper. The result of this is the most stunning, and I would anticipate the most valuable example of such a variety that I am aware of on any KGV stamp. Indeed, most of the other paper fold varieties of any significance on KGV issues, and there are not many, show normal printing on the front as the fold occurred *after printing* and *prior to perforating*. Accordingly, they show partially imperforate stamps and no void in the printing nor any portion of the stamps as printed on the gum. A few show a partial void coupled with a partial imperforate of the stamp on the front as printed.

How much this item should be worth is somewhat difficult to estimate, although some indications can be found in the two known *similar* Kangaroo items most recently offered. The third watermark 9d violet with a similar although significantly smaller variety was last sold for \$5,434 in January 2004 at the sale of the **Pope Kangaroo** collection conducted by **Prestige Philately**. This latter variety is shown in figure 6, and it should be noted that in this instance, the paper fold remained in place during both the printing and perforating stages. By comparison, the larger variety, also folded during printing and perforating stages of the third watermark 2/- brown sold for \$8,715 in May 2002, at the sale of the **Nelson Kangaroos** conducted by **Premier Philately** as it was then, now known as **Prestige Philately**. This item is listed in the **ACSC** as 'Partly printed on gum' (number 37ca), and is given a footnote stating 'one mint top right corner example is recorded partially printed on the gummed side due to a paper fold'. Not only are such varieties quite spectacular, they are all very rare indeed, with only a handful recorded.



Figure 6



Figure 7

If you happen to own or come across an item similar to these, or something else out of the ordinary, I am always very interested to be able to record it, and if suitable, write it up in this column so that other readers of *Stamp News* can be informed. In such instances, if you would like to send an item for examination, please contact me in the first instance in order to make suitable arrangements for a safe journey for the item.

