

BRITISH WEST AFRICA STUDY CIRCLE.

Following the recirculation in the Bulletin of the lengthy comments, arguments and counter-arguments on the Gambia 1886/87 Issue 6d. it was felt that these had extended over so long a period and reached such a complexity that they were likely to cause little but confusion to the majority of Members.

Accordingly, Messrs. Charlton, McCaig and Whitfield met to re-examine the material in their own collections in the light of all the information available and the opinions expressed by other Members. Their conclusions are summarised in the following notes which they hope will lead to a clearer understanding and appreciation of this stamp.

April 1961.

THE GAMBIA.

The 1886/87 Issue 6d Green.

Messrs. De La Rue invoiced only four consignments of this stamp as follows -

3rd June 1886	-	7,650 stamps (510 sheets) and 400 Specimens
21st March 1887	-	7,500 Stamps (500 sheets)
11th February 1889-	-	15,000 Stamps (1000 ")
5th December 1893	-	30,000 Stamps (2,000 ")

The stamps were printed from two plates; the first three consignments being all from Plate 1, and the last sending of 30,000 stamps in 1893 being from Plate 11, which is distinguishable by the square-cut north-west corner of the name tablet frame line (more or less rounded on Plate 1); the absence of sloping labels on stamps 1 and 5 and tall stamps 2, 3, and 4 of the top row, and by its freedom from flaws.

The main purpose of these notes is to describe the stamps in such a manner that specimens may be allocated to the correct consignment. For any such consideration of shades and varieties, it is helpful to have in mind -

1. The mixing of printing inks in the 19th century was to a large degree experimental, and considerable difficulty was sometimes experienced in matching shades and in obtaining a "mix" smooth and stable enough to produce a uniform effect throughout a printing and fully able to resist the action of light, water or heat. (See the notes in Gibbons to the first two issues of the Malta 1/2d).
2. Wide variations in shade can be obtained with the same ink if varying thicknesses of ink are used, and distinct shades may

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occur in one printing if the ink is mixed several times.
(Postage Stamps in the Making - page 235).

3. A letter from De la Rue dated 17th November 1898 included the following: "We beg to say that in printing it is impossible to avoid a certain number of sheets being either of too light or too dark a shade. The light sheets are printed immediately after washing up, and the dark sheets occur when the process of printing goes on for too long a period without washing up the rollers".
4. Many of the minor cameo flaws are affected by the amount or quality of the ink used - a well inked sheet or sheets may show no sign of a flaw which is common to others, and there are many examples of a white flaw appearing on other sheets as an area of very dark colour (the "blackout" flaws).
5. Light and climate can affect the shades, particularly noticeable in used stamps.
6. Nomenclature: Considerable confusion has arisen from Gibbons cataloguing No. 32a as "priceless" mint and scarce used. Some years ago they stated that the catalogue described what they sold as that shade, but agreed that in the eyes of other beholders different descriptions might seem more appropriate.

Turning to the stamps, it is perhaps easiest to deal with Plate 11 first. This consignment has only been found in shades of rather dull greyish green which vary only slightly. The characteristic is the slate or grey tinge which is absent from all the shades of Plate 1. This is S.G.34.

This leaves us with the first three consignments: All Plate 1; and each consignment having its own particular group of shades.

The first invoice included 400 Specimens. These were machine overprinted SPECIMEN in black and are all yellow-green. The issued stamps are similar to the Specimens, and are found with red GAMBIA PAID postmarks dated 1886, so that there can be no doubt that these represented the first consignment. The yellowish shade, which might almost be termed green-yellow, is very distinct from the later printings. Although Gibbons catalogue this stamp as yellowish olive-green, we find it difficult to trace any true olive in the colour. We prefer to describe this printing generally as yellow-green.

We will leave the second printing for the moment and turn to the third consignment of 1889. Probably more than half of the Plate 1 6d's. seen these days fall within this group, which may be described as bronze-green in medium to dark shades. The description is suggested by the strong metallic sheen which is peculiar to this group and which is particularly noticeable on mint stamps.

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We now return to the second consignment which in our view comprises stamps which can be truly called olive-green. The characteristic of these is their dull or matt appearance on comparison with the bronze-greens. The ink has not the lightness of the first group, nor the metallic sheen of group three, and is "greener" than the other groups.

In none of the consignments are the shades wholly consistent: The first group includes a stamp in Whitfield's collection (of which McConaghey reports a used copy) which is deficient in yellow but also lacks the depth of green found in even the lightest examples of the second consignment. Reaction of this stamp under the quartz lamp suggests affinity with the yellow-greens and it is regarded as an exceptional shade of the first group. The second group varies in depth of colour but all these stamps are noticeably darker than the first consignment. At the other end of the scale the dark olive-greens are of almost the same depth of colour as the light bronze-greens but lack the metallic sheen so noticeable in mint copies of the latter. The third group includes a range of shades from medium to an intensely dark bronze-green which is uncommon.

Complete sheets of Plate 11 are not too hard to find, but Plate 1 sheets are scarce, particularly those from the first and second consignments. The second comb perforator appears to have been used for all printings except the third consignment (the bronze-greens), which exceptionally show the first comb perforation: i.e. sheets have the extra vertical line of perforation in the right-hand margin.

It is generally agreed that considerable misunderstanding has been occasioned by Gibbons listing of No. 32a olive-green. This shade as classified and described in the foregoing notes is not common in mint condition but neither is it rare, and there does not appear to be any reason why S.G. 32a should not be priced unused. From the numbers seen in leading collections it appears to be nearly as plentiful as S.G. 32. It seems likely that the "a" number was originally intended to cover stamps of the second consignment which had lost some of their intensity through exposure. The effect of climate is always problematical, but in the case of the olive-greens the used stamps appear greener and more 'flat' than mint copies.

In conclusion we summarise the 6d green as follows:

<u>Consignment</u>	<u>Shade</u>	<u>Plate</u>	<u>Perf.</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>S.G.</u>
1 - 3/6/86	Yellow-green	1	2nd comb	7,650	32
2 - 21/3/87	Olive-green	1	2nd comb	7,500	32a
3 - 11/2/89	(Bronze-green (Deep bronze-green	1	1st comb	15,000	(33 (33a
4 - 5/12/93	Slate-green	2	2nd comb	30,000	34