

Title: *Philately of Edwardian Natal, South Africa (1901-1910)* by Brian Schrire

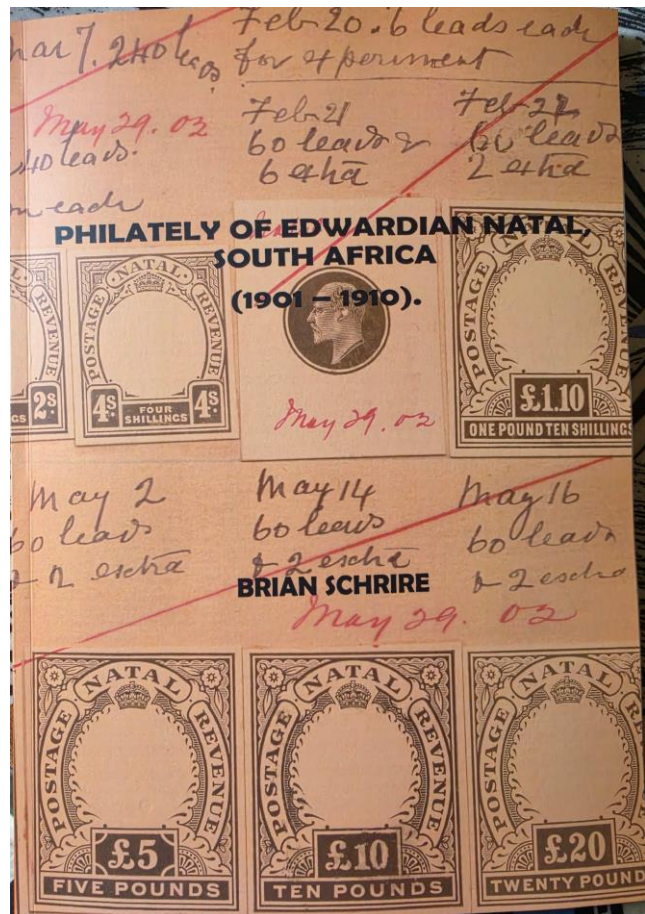
Reviewer: Charles Stirton, Bath Philatelic Society.

Review

Brian Schrire's 199-page book, *Philately of Edwardian Natal, South Africa (1901-1910)*, represents a significant and scholarly contribution to Colonial Natal Edwardian philately. The book brings together and expands on individual studies by various authors and on an extensive collection of personal material started by his father Dr. Leonard Schrire (1923-1999) and built on further by himself. What makes this book special is that his meticulous research has accessed previously unobtainable information via the internet that was not accessible to earlier authors. Through visits to libraries and detailed study of auction catalogues and additional records of essays, die proofs, striking book cut-down die proofs, colour appendices, colour trials, ink recipes, stamps booklets, regular issue stamps, specimens, revenues, perfin stamps

and postal stationary, he has helped to fill in gaps from previous studies and enabled some reassessments to be made of conclusions from prior studies. Many gaps have now been filled, and this has enabled him to update in detail where research is still needed. The book is profusely illustrated in high resolution colour and black and white photographs. I was fascinated by the detailed descriptions of the complicated die and plate production processes plus the decision processes and correspondences between the British Government, the Colonial Office Natal, and the Printers De la Rue & Co. These correspondences highlight just how complex it was during the Edwardian period to produce stamp sets for the Colonies.

Anyone interested in the production of British Colonial stamp issues, especially the omnibus issues from this period will enjoy this book. As with the Natal stamps, the various colony issues of the period were constrained by the Universal Colour Scheme of 1881 and the Universal key plate design (1887) which tried to standardize design and colours thereby reducing costs of the complex quality controls and production methods. As some Colonies deviated on colours there did arise some unintended consequences. For example, the decision to not use doubly fugitive inks on dual purpose postage and revenue stamps led to fraudulent use of the high value issues when chemically "cleaned" and reused.



The book has four important and comprehensive appendices. Appendix 1 covers the Natal KEVII die proofs and is a testimony to the detailed research by the author with numerous gaps being filled. Appendix 2 is a Consolidated Master Chronology. Appendix 3 is a detailed Stamp Production Sequence table. Finally, Appendix 4 is a comprehensive colour selection Analysis (1902-1909). These appendices are a useful template for scholars of other British colony stamp issues from this period. Throughout the text is large and easily readable.

The book finishes with a chapter on 'Conclusions and future directions' of study. He explains where he has made new ground and makes tribute to those authors which preceded him and what still needs to be studied. The book is a meticulous synthesis of earlier research and incorporates a substantial body of new archival material. It is highly recommended.

Books are £30 + p & p available from at bschrire@gmail.com