

## Diamonds Series Part 4:

# Diamond Colour

by Val Baynton

For descriptive and for valuation purposes, diamond dealers use what is known as ‘the 4Cs. These refer to cut, clarity, colour and carat weight. In this final part of a series of four articles examining the four Cs, Val Baynton looks at colour. Curiously, for diamonds the two extremes of colour, i.e. lack of colour and intensity of colour, are both sought after by diamond aficionados.

Many diamonds may appear colourless but, in fact, most have a tint of yellow, and, since the mid 1950s, every ‘colourless’ diamond has been graded against a colour scale that was devised by the *Gemological Institute of America* (GIA). The scale was introduced to standardise the industry and because dealers were already using the letters of A, B and C, the scale begins at the letter D and progresses through the alphabet to Z.

Diamonds graded D, E (both exceptional white) and F (rare white), are the best quality, but the differences in tone between the three categories are virtually impossible to distinguish except by experts. G (rare white) H, (white) I, or J grades (slightly tinted white), are still virtually colourless and so represent good value, especially if combined with good cut, clarity and/or carat weight. Grades K and L (tinted white) are less good, whilst grades M to Z are referred to as ‘tinted colour’, and the yellow shade is progressively more obvious, even to the untrained eye. Diamonds can be graded by eye, but are more normally graded by examining clean stones through their widest point and comparing them against a set of pre-graded master stones. For colourless diamonds lack of colour is the prized quality and commands premium prices, whereas for coloured or fancy diamonds the opposite is true and the more intense or vivid the shade, whether blue, yellow or pink, the more the diamond is worth.

Colour in diamonds is generally caused by impurities of trace elements, which were present when the diamonds formed millions of years ago deep below the earth’s surface. The most common impurity is nitrogen causing a yellow or even orange colour whilst boron results in a blue diamond. Other fancy diamonds can be green, caused by naturally occurring radiation reacting with the diamond over thousands of years, whilst pink, purple or red diamonds develop as a result of a defect or alteration in the atomic and internal structure of the stone whilst the diamond is being formed. Black diamonds are a result of numerous dark inclusions which prevent refraction and dispersion of light and give the stones a dark appearance. Of all these shades blue, pink and yellow hues are generally considered to be the most desirable.

### Famous Coloured Diamonds.

Coloured diamonds are much rarer than colourless ones and large ones rarer still, so unsurprisingly there are several legendary stones that have interesting and often mysterious histories. Amongst the blue diamonds are the 45.52 carat *Hope* and the 35.56 carat *Wittelsbach* diamonds, whilst pink ones include *La Grand Condé* at 9.1 carats and amongst the green varieties, the *Dresden Green* at 41 carats is an exceptional stone. All these legendary diamonds have had several, mainly royal or aristocratic owners and provenances, along with stories of derring-do, can be traced back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Three are now in museum collections: the *Hope* in the *Smithsonian Institute*, to whom it was donated in 1958 by Harry Winston, the America diamond dealer and jeweller; *La Grand Condé* has pride of place in the *Condé Museum*, Château de Chantilly, Chantilly, France and the

*Dresden Green* was mounted to create an impressive hat ornament and is stored in the *Green Vault* at the Dresden Palace in Dresden, Germany. The *Wittelsbach*, now called the *Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond* has recently, and controversially, been re-polished by its current owner Laurence Graff, and it has been on public display alongside the *Hope* diamond in the *Smithsonian*. These diamonds are so important because they provide a standard of an undisputedly naturally coloured gem, that more recently discovered coloured diamonds can be compared against. Technology and science has developed so rapidly in recent years that it is possible to manufacture coloured diamonds and for this reason it is important to only buy stones that are properly certified.

Editor’s Note: The *Hope* diamond is only a small part of the original *Tavernier Blue*. Its first known owner was the French gem merchant Jean Baptiste Tavernier. The histories of Tavernier’s journey’s suggest the gemstone originated in India, in the Kollur mine in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh (at the time part of the Golconda kingdom), and was acquired in the seventeenth century, before being sold to the ‘Sun King’, Louis XIV whence it became known as the *French Blue*. This fascinating story may be followed, from the seventeenth century to the *Hope* diamond on Wikipedia.

### The definitive ‘C’ quality

Of the four Cs then, cut, colour, clarity or carat weight, which is the most important when buying a diamond? For me the cut is the clinching factor. The diamond could be the most amazing carat size, but without the cut and the consummate skill of diamond cutters and jewellery makers in creating a sparkling stone with perfect proportions to make the most of the individual and specific dimensions of the gem, the stone will be the poorer. Colour is clearly a vital factor and intensely coloured stones and pure colourless ones, are incredibly desirable, but a diamond cutter is still needed to emphasise its charms. Also, for most collectors, the prices of these incredibly rare stones are so high that consideration of purchase is not possible at all. Finally, clarity. Inclusions are fascinating because they reveal so much about the way the stone has survived the incredible forces of nature but again an expert cutter is required to cut the stone in such a way that light is reflected to the very best, avoiding the inclusions and their potentially deadening effect on the reflection and refraction of light through the stone.

### The Colour Table

GIA - The Gemological Institute of America

CIBJO - the World Jewellery Confederation

GIA	UK Traditional	CIBJO	Comments
D	Finest White	Exceptional White +	Colourless
E	Finest White	Finest White	Virtually Colourless
F	Fine White	Rare White +	Virtually Colourless
G	Fine White	Rare White	Virtually Colourless
H	White	White	Virtually Colourless
I	Commercial White	Slightly Tinted White	Very Faint Colour
J	Top Silver Cape	Slightly Tinted White	Very Faint Colour
K	TSC to Silver Cape	Tinted White	Faint Colour
L	Silver Cape	Tinted White	Faint Colour
M	Light Cape	Tinted	Colour increases with Grade
N	Light Cape	Tinted	Colour increases with Grade
O	Cape	Tinted	Colour increases with Grade
P	Cape	Tinted	Colour increases with Grade
Q	Cape	Tinted	Colour increases with Grade
R	Cape to Dark Cape	Tinted	Colour increases with Grade
S-Z	Dark Cape	Tinted	Deep Colour



**1**  
The most expensive diamonds in our archives. Two-stone diamond pendant, 4.96 carats and 4.11 carats, highest colour scale grading. *Halls Fine Art, Shrewsbury. Oct 10. HP £180,000. ABP: £212,400.*



**2**  
Rare diamond three stone ring, 3.6 cts, internally flawless, colour grade D. *Drewweatt Neate, Donnington. July 06. HP £56,000.*



**3**  
Impressive 18ct white gold set solitaire diamond of 4.05cts with AnchorCert certificate stating stone to be old English brilliant cut, clarity VVS2, colour H, size G. *Gorringes, Lewes. Dec 11. HP: £37,000. ABP: £43,660.*



**4**  
Platinum set solitaire diamond ring, approx 3.84cts with Precious Stone Laboratory diamond report stating the stone as 3.84cts, colour F / rare white +, SI1, size M. *Gorringes, Lewes. Dec 12. HP: £25,000. ABP: £29,500.*



**5**  
18ct white gold set single stone princess cut diamond ring, with HRD certificate stating weight at 3.57cts clarity VVSI, colour grade rare white (G), size M. *Gorringes, Lewes. Jun 11. HP: £21,000. ABP: £24,780.*



**6**  
Fine cushion shaped, old mine cut diamond solitaire ring, platinum mount, approx 4.3 ct, est. colour G/H/I, est. clarity approx VS1/2. *Arnolds Keys, Aylsham. Nov 12. HP: £19,500. ABP: £23,010.*



**7**  
18ct gold solitaire diamond twist ring, brilliant cut diamond claw set in white gold to the yellow gold hoop, GIA certificate stating: weight 4.3ct, clarity 'II' and colour 'K', weight approx 5gms. *Halls, Shrewsbury. Oct 12. HP: £10,500. ABP: £12,390.*



**8**  
Good quality old European cushion cut diamond solitaire ring set in 18ct white gold mount, 4 double claw collet, knife edge shoulder shank, weight 2.93ct, size 9.76 x 8.89 x 4.73 mm, clarity SI2, colour N/O, total weight 5.1 grams, ring size O, hallmark 18ct white gold Birmingham by TT. *Willingham Auctions, Willingham. Feb 13. HP: £9,000. ABP: £10,620.*

The prices quoted are actual Hammer Prices (HP) followed by the Approximate Buyer's Price (ABP) which includes an average buyer's premium of 15% + VAT.



**9**  
Solitaire diamond ring, cushion shape old brilliant cut stone of 9.5 x 8.5 x 5.8mm estimated mounted weight 3.65ct colour assessed as L-M (drawing some yellow) clarity assessed as VSI to white precious metal mount and shank makers mark M.B but no other marks. *Golding Young & Thos. Mawer, Lincoln. Aug 11. HP: £8,200. ABP: £9,676.*



**10**  
Edwardian 18ct gold mounted all diamond set dress ring, central old cut yellow diamond approx 1ct, contained within a border of 12 small old cut brilliant diamonds each approx .05ct (gross weight 3.1 grammes - ring size Q. *Canterbury Auction Galleries, Kent. June 13. HP £7,000. ABP: £8,400.*



**11**  
Pair of coloured diamond single-stone ear-studs, round old brilliant-cut stones each approx 8.25mm dia, fancy yellow and brown in rex claw settings, certificate from Gem Testing Laboratory of Great Britain stating yellow diamond weighs 2.37cts, is 'fancy yellow' and 'natural colour'. *Bearne's, Exeter. June 05. HP £6,800. ABP: £8,104.*



**12**  
Diamond solitaire ring, brilliant cut stone 1.09cts, claw set to 2 shoulders each pave set 3 small diamonds, unmarked plain white metal shank, size L 1/2, with BGI certificate stating diamond is colour grade E, clarity A6. (SI1) *Hartleys, Ilkley. Jun 12. HP: £4,700. ABP: £5,546.*



**13**  
Solitaire diamond ring, brilliant cut stone, approx 2.5cts, claw set within baguette shoulders, platinum shank, size H 1/2, colour J, clarity P-1. *Hartleys, Ilkley. Mar 13. HP: £4,600. ABP: £5,428.*



**14**  
Victorian solitaire diamond ring, diamond shoulders and yellow gold shank, size N, main stone wt. 2.20ct, colour I, clarity VS2. *Hartleys, Ilkley. Mar 13. HP: £3,900. ABP: £4,602.*



**15**  
Art Deco single stone diamond ring, old European cut diamond, est. weight approx 1.50ct, claw set to sea scroll collet, diamond set shoulders, marked platinum. Finger size N 1/4. Diamond est. approx colour H/I, clarity SI1-SI2. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Feb 11. HP: £2,800. ABP: £3,304.*



**16**  
Quality certified platinum & diamond ring, brilliant cut central diamond 1.03cts, colour i-j, clarity VS, 3 smaller diamonds each side of shoulder; ring size O 1/2, Anchor Cert certificate commissioned by Cuttlestones. *Cuttlestones, Penkridge. Mar 13. HP: £2,100. ABP: £2,478.*



**17**  
Lady's/gent's diamond set ring, 6 channel set rows of baguette cut stones on heavy tapering white gold shank, 154 stones, total approx 6.93 cts, colour assessed as G-H, clarity assessed VS-SI, white gold, cast setting with very minor gaps at ends where stones meet metal, tested 18ct, size T or 9.1/2 US (20.7g) boxed, valuation of £6,500 dated 2003. *A F Brock & Co Ltd, Stockport. May 13. HP: £1,750. ABP: £2,065.*



**18**  
Platinum solitaire ring, set with a pear shaped brilliant cut diamond (approx 0.77ct, colour approx E/F). *Richard Winterton, Lichfield. Feb 13. HP: £1,500. ABP: £1,770.*



**19**  
Tiffany & Co platinum set seven stone half eternity ring, channel set 7 round brilliant cut diamonds, total diamond approx 0.91cts, with original box & retail replacement valuation from Tiffany & Co, New York, stating diamonds to be of G colour, VS clarity, replacement value of \$5000 (dated 2004). *Frank Marshall, Knutsford. Mar 13. HP: £1,400. ABP: £1,652.*



**20**  
Solitaire diamond ring, brilliant cut stone of 0.72cts, claw set to a plain white metal shank, size M, colour G, clarity VVS2. *Hartleys, Ilkley. Mar 13. HP: £1,400. ABP: £1,652.*



**21**  
18ct gold solitaire diamond ring, emerald cut diamond claw set in white gold to the yellow gold hoop, Anchor Certificate stating diamond weight as '1.03', colour 'K' and clarity 'VVS 2', weight approx 3gms. *Halls, Shrewsbury. Oct 12. HP: £1,350. ABP: £1,593.*



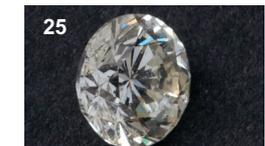
**22**  
Stamped 18ct white gold 3 stone diamond ring, 3 old cut diamonds approx 0.97ct, 0.65ct, 0.55ct, claw set to knife edge shoulders, recent valuation for insurance assessing diamonds as I-J colour, I1 clarity. *Frank Marshall, Knutsford. Mar 13. HP: £1,100. ABP: £1,298.*



**23**  
Lady's diamond cluster ring, width at front 16mm, centre cluster of 7 brilliant cut stones, 12 princess cut stones set in double row to either side in channel setting, row of 13 baguette cut diamonds to top & bottom, total diamond weight 2.25cts, clarity given as SI to SI2, colour given as H & I, all in 14ct yellow gold, size N or 6.1/2 US (12.3g) boxed. *A F Brock & Co Ltd, Stockport. Feb 13. HP: £1,000. ABP: £1,180.*



**24**  
Solitaire diamond ring, emerald cut stone, baguette shoulders, plain platinum shank, size M 1/2, total diamond wt. 0.83ct, colour D, clarity VVS 1/2. *Hartleys, Ilkley. Mar 13. HP: £980. ABP: £1,156.*



**25**  
Brilliant cut diamond, 1.02 carats, VS2 colour G, still in original packet. *A F Brock & Co Ltd, Stockport. Aug 11. HP: £920. ABP: £1,085.*