

Great Britain Precancelled Perfins by Mike J. Burrows

In Great Britain no precancels in the style known for Belgium, France or the United States, exist. Instead, the precancel takes the form of a special postmark.

Previously I have dealt with the special postmarks issued to specific companies, such as H. S. King, Wm. Dawson or W. H. Smith (see Bulletin Vol. 28, No. 8, Sept. 1975, page 3).

But what of those companies that were not issued with their own distinctive marking? Well, in 1870 the members of the Provincial Newspaper Society approved a plan to send stamped wrappers to their local post office during the day to be cancelled and returned for use later in the same day. This, of course, meant that the post office could postmark the wrappers during a quiet period and thereby relieve some of the congestion during the hectic posting periods. The publishers obtained the advantage of being able to post later than the general public.

To give some idea of how important these arrangements were - one of the sights of London was the melee and confusion at the Newspaper window of the General Post Office. Indeed, to go and witness this spectacular event was considered a must in the itinerary of the well-to-do Victorian tourist, as the contemporary engraving above shows.

Over the years some changes were made to the London cancels, especially in the number of radial bars, which can vary from 6 to 10 bars. Illustrated below are a few of the types you may come across. The dates which appeared under LONDON have been omitted in the illustrations.



SIX O'CLOCK P.M.: THE NEWSPAPER WINDOW AT THE GENERAL POST-OFFICE.

This is what the news agents were trying to avoid.

Some of the publishers had the added advantage that instead of sending the wrappers to the local post office, the post office sent an employee along to the publishers' premises to stamp the wrappers.

From records kept of the Perfins noted as having the London precancellation, I find that some can be identified as being of newspaper publishing origin. Of course it does follow that the same Perfins can be found with other cancellations when used for ordinary mailing purposes.

Also, in the provinces, no special postmark was used for this special service that can be definitely allotted to this duty.* As yet no example has been noted by me on postal stationery which was issued from October 1st, 1870, and which has been Perfinned.

*this only applies in the context of precancelled Perfins.



Precancelled Perfins Checklist:

307.1	BGL	14,10,7	4½mm Lennon Ltd, London, S.E.1
721.1	BTJ	14,7,7	4mm
	B&W	14,14,14 (III)	4½mm
471.3	DT	11,7	7½mm
536	D.X.	11,9	5½mm Daily Express, St. Bride Street, London E.C.
172.1	E.G.	10,10	4½mm Estates Gazette Ltd., London
421.2	GRAPHIC	9,10,8,8,10,4,7	4mm
21.	HAG/&CO	12,10,10/12,8,6	4½mm (III)
158.	ILN	5,7,13	4½mm Illustrated London News
	K	10	5mm
438.3	L&P	7,14,10 (III)	5mm London & Paris Exchange Ltd. London E.C.3
	MP	11,8	4½mm
	S&S	11,12,11 (IIIa)	4½mm

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Precancelled Perfins Checklist (continued from page 3) _____

718	STB/PL	10, 6, 14/10, 7	5mm	St. Brides Press Ltd., London W.C.1
1.8	T	7	9½mm	
194.2	TGL	7, 10, 7	4½mm	
197	WD/&C ^o	15, 11/13, 8, 6 (III)	5½mm	Wm. Dunn & Co., London E.C.2
204.3	WD/&S	16, 11/14, 10 (III)	5mm	Wm. Dawson & Sons Ltd., London
380.3	WHS	14, 16, 10	5, 7½, 5mm	W. H. Smith & Sons Ltd., London
