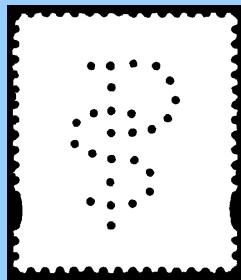
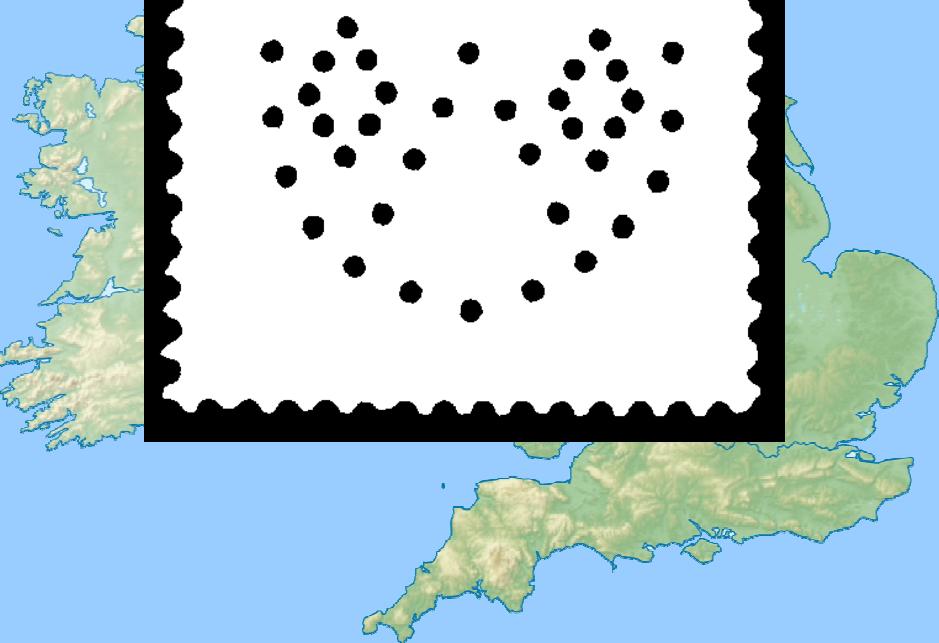
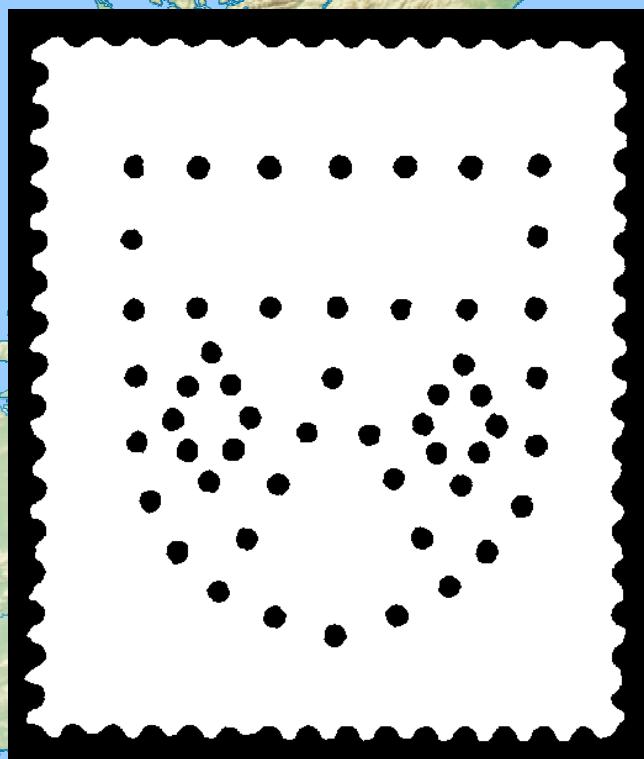
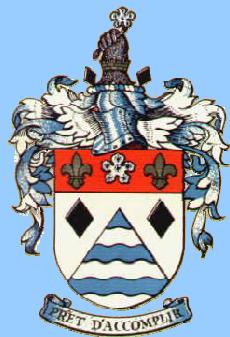
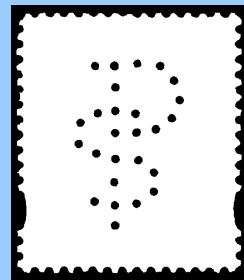


... PERFINS ...



Some notes for a Beginner



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These questions and their answers are followed by a brief history of ***The Perfin Society***, along with details of the 'GB Perfins Catalogue', Bulletin, Auction, and Website. 28-30

The Perfin shown enlarged on the front cover is that used briefly, 1936-1941, by ***Nuneaton Borough Council***.

Copyright ...

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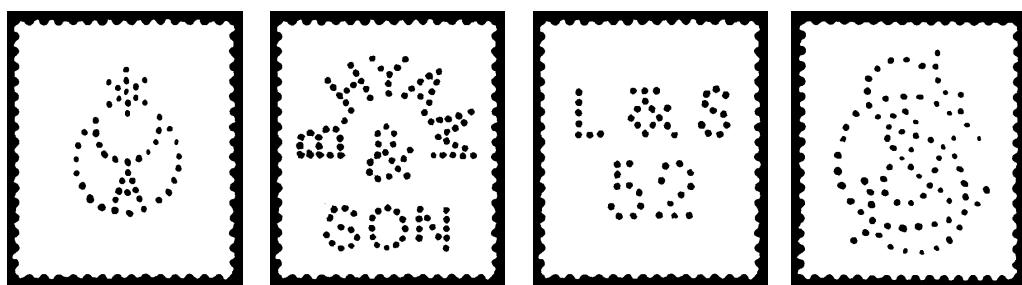
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These notes are intended to help someone new to Perfins to come up to speed with the subject by answering a selection of questions relating to their 'collection and study'.

1. What is a Perfin?

In simple terms, a 'Perfin' is a number of small holes in a distinct pattern perforated through a postage stamp to act as a *deterrent against theft*.



The definition of a Perfin for the purpose of inclusion in

'The Gault Catalogue of Great British Perfins' is:

A Great British postage stamp (or some other GB stamp valid for postage) which has been perforated with the initials (and/or a geometric shape) by a Company, Local Authority or Public body, etc., *prior* to the use of the stamp as postage on a postal item or used on a receipt.



The 'most Perfinned stamp' from each reign.

Also included with Postage Stamps are Postal Stationery, Railway Parcel Stamps, Telegraph Stamps, and the various Inland Revenue Stamps used for receipt purposes prior to the introduction of the Queen Victoria 1d Lilac (12th July 1881). However, it should be borne in mind that these are greatly in the minority compared to Postage Stamps.



The same technique can also be found applied to Foreign Bills, Contract Notes, and even Medicine Stamp Duty labels!



2. What is the derivation of the word 'Perfin'?

The word 'Perfin' was first coined by **Hallock Card** (1920-1956) in the U.S.A in December **1943**, when he (and a handful of others) founded the US Perfins Club. He called their newsletter '**Perfins**' and produced in parts from **1945** a US Perfins Catalog.

Catalog of PERFORATE INITIAL STAMPS

Edited and published by
Hallock Card **Otselic, New York**

As you can see, it's a contraction of the two words '**Perforate**' and '**Initial**', i.e. **Perfin**, the plural of which is **Perfins**. Having said that, most collectors take it as a contraction of either '**Perforated Initials**', or '**Perforated Insignia**'.

3. How many different Perfins can be found on the stamps of Great Britain?

Currently (January 2026) there are **25,352** Perfin Dies (where DD = Different Dies) recorded on **290,863** Different postage stamps (DDF = Different Die Face). Of these, **16,746** (66.1%) have a known or suspected user (or users), which we call an 'identity'.

And by extension, the World?

Although a little out of date now, the US Perfins Club conducted a survey in **2008** which resulted in this 'league table'.

	Country	2008 Survey	2026	
1	Great Britain	19,665	31.8%	25,352
2	Germany	13,626	22.0%	14,000
3	United States	6,351	10.3%	6,375
4	Australia (inc States)	3,103	5.0%	3,250
5	France	2,322	3.8%	2,989
6	Austria	2,563	4.1%	2,685
7	Belgium	1,472	2.4%	1,540
8	India (inc States)	1,055	1.7%	1,224
9	Denmark	1,056	1.7%	1,150
10	Czechoslovakia	1,050	1.7%	1,100
11	Netherlands	854	1.4%	895
12	Switzerland	816	1.3%	855
13	Romania	764	1.2%	785
14	Ireland/Eire	316	0.5%	762
15	Japan	657	1.1%	685
16	Bavaria	507	0.8%	669
17	Spain	411	0.7%	430
18	Canada	339	0.5%	362
19	Argentina	234	0.4%	245
20	Portugal	196	0.3%	205
21	Sweden	163	0.3%	170
	Others ...	4,288	6.9%	3,272
	Totals	61,808	100.0%	69,000
				100.0%

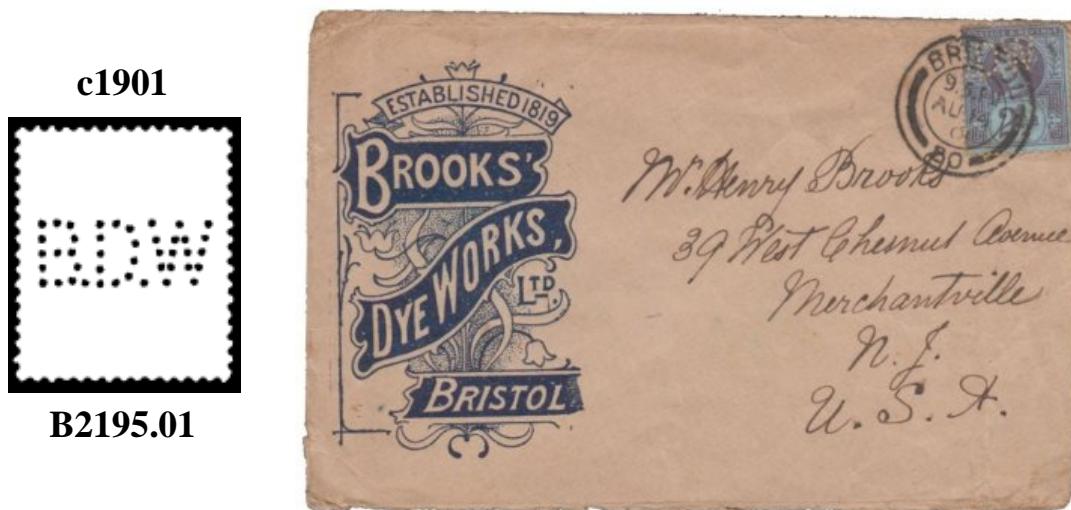
Entries in *italics* are reasonable estimates.

4. How do we know who used any particular GB Perfin?

Essentially there are three main methods by which a user can be determined. The associated Perfin used on each example is also shown so you can see how the letters used in the Perfin tie in (or not!) with the company name etc.

1. The name of the user appears on an envelope (either as a return address on the front of the envelope or as a 'cachet' on the envelope flap) or on a receipt sent out or issued by the company or authority. This would form a '*positive*' identity.

Here we see an 'illustrated cover' telling us not just the name of the company, but also what they did, where they did it, and when they started doing it! Illustrated covers like this are few and far between, and are thus highly prized and sought after.



Next we see the return address from the front of an envelope addressed to **Charles Bein** (1884-1956), a 'Perfin Pioneer'!

1941-1947



Next we have an example of a cachet (shown as an inset below) on the envelope flap acting as a return address, should one be required.



Moving on we have a most unusual and rare method in that the name of the user and/or their products have been printed on the envelope in the form of a place-holder for the stamp.



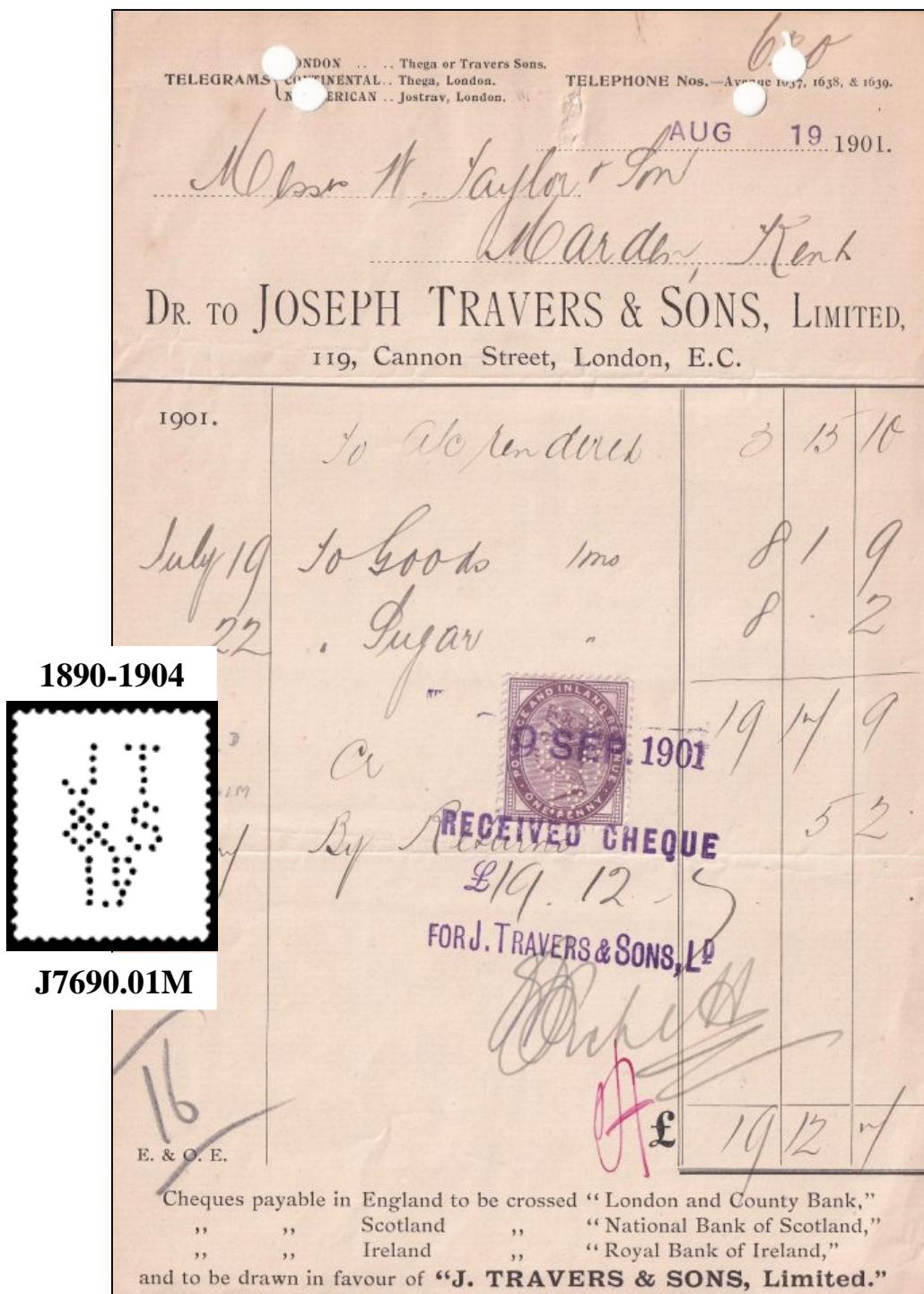
And then there are ‘Trade Marks’, ‘Brand Names’, and ‘Telegraphic Addresses’. The ‘*Anchor*’ Trade Mark registered for use by ‘*Clark & Co*’ can be seen in their Perfin.



Typical Cotton
Reel Label



Life is made easy if the Perfin has been used on a Receipt, as by and large, the name of the user will also be present.

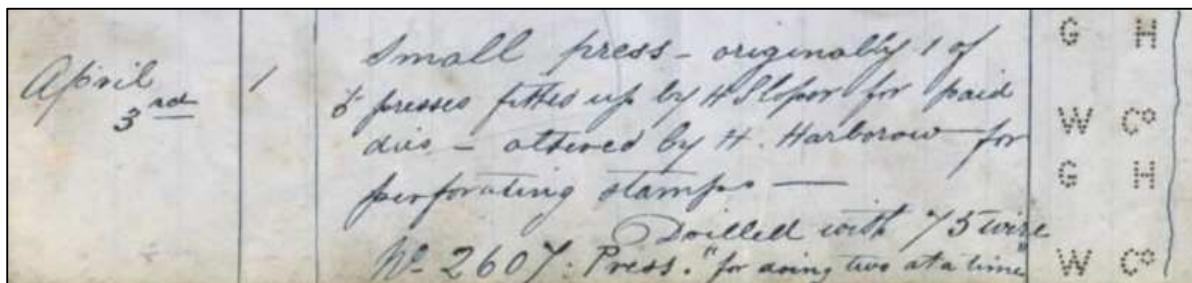


1853 Stamp Act - Receipts for purchases of £2 and above were liable to a stamp duty of one penny, denoted by either an embossed stamp applied by the Stamp Office or by an adhesive stamp duly cancelled by the person affixing the stamp. On 1st September 1920 the rate was increased from 1d to 2d, but eventually abolished on 31st January 1971.

2. We sometimes know from the Sloper records who a particular press/die was made for. This would also form a '*positive*' identity or user.

Many years ago (in the early 1990s) the Perfin Society was fortunate in obtaining a number of ledgers from 'J Sloper & Co'. Shown below is the entry in one of the 'Proof' Ledgers showing on impression of *the very first customer Perforating Press*.

The Order Book records: 28th March 1868 - '5 Small Presses originally fitted to Paid dies by **H Sloper**', Nos 2603-2607. One altered by **H Harborow** for a die with letters - stop at the back & front. Below we see the Proof strike showing that the die was 'altered by **H Harborow** for perforating stamps', and consisted of two patterns arranged vertically - i.e. **1x2**.



Later, post WWII ledgers show the company name and address. Below is the entry for '**Thew, Arnott & Co Ltd**'.

NAME <u>Thew, Arnott & Co. Ltd.</u>	
ADDRESS <u>270, London Road,</u>	
<u>Wallington,</u>	
<u>Surrey.</u>	
DELIVERY	Post Deduct
RECEIPTS	
COMMISSION	With Order
CHEQUES	With Order
CHARGES	
POSTAGE S	£1%
do. R	-
PRINT S	
do. R	
INS. S & R	
REMARKS:	
T A E C P	

3. Circumstantial evidence, such as postmarks and periods of use, can often point to the likelihood of a particular company using the Perfin. This technique requires access to local Trade directories and other information available on the Internet. This is known as a '*suspected*' identity/user (Ø).

1895-1928



Trying to determine the user of a Perfin from a London postmark usually involves too many possibilities, but in this case the task was made easier because the postmark was for Chelsea, London SW. The Perfin is “H&C°/L^{td}” (H1620.02), in use 1895-1928.

H1620.02

A search of London Trade Directories under firms beginning with ‘H’ for 1895 produced a short list of half a dozen firms. By going through subsequent London directories for 1899, 1902, 1910, 1915, 1920, 1928, and 1933, and crossing them off if they didn’t appear, rapidly reduced the list to just one. **‘Hooper & Co Ltd’**, coach builders, 54 St James’ St - SW, with a factory in King’s Rd, Chelsea, London SW. Here’s their entry in Kelly’s 1915 London directory …

Hooper & Co. Ltd. motor body builders & coachbuilders to His Majesty the King, H.M. the Queen, H.M. Queen Alexandra & H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, 54 St. James' street, Piccadilly SW (T A “Sociable, St. James”; Telephone No. 912 Regent); works, 77A, King's road, Chelsea SW (T N 4762 Kensington [2 lines]); garage, 44A, Smith ter. Chelsea SW—T N 1848 Kensngtn

The company was founded in **1806** as ‘Adams & Hooper’, and took on ‘Ltd’ liability in **1895**, but by **1928** they were known as ‘Hooper & Co (Coachbuilders) Ltd’. During WWI they built the Sopwith Dolphin fighter biplane.



Note: Hooper’s exhibited their coach-built cars for the last time at the **1959** Earls Court Motor Show.

5. How do I best store or write-up my Perfins?

I'm often asked '*how do other collectors arrange/store their Perfins*'? Of course, there's no right or wrong way to do it, because we all collect Perfins for different reasons. Perhaps it would help if I outlined how I approached the problem almost four decades ago, and so potentially 'learn from my mistakes'. I guess the first question to answer is *what to collect*, but whatever decision you come to, *be prepared to change your mind!*

For me, since a child, I've always been interested in both railways (or more accurately, steam locomotives), and collecting postage stamps, and as a youth moving into adulthood, I specialised in the Line Engraved issues. These two interests came together one lunchtime way back in 1984 when I worked in the design offices of the 'Austin Rover Group' in Coventry. By chance, I walked past a fellow employee whose desk was strewn with postage stamps, so I had to stop and ask him what he was up to. In the course of conversation, I mentioned my two interests, to which he replied 'did you know you can find Line Engraved stamps perforated with the initials of Railway Companies'? 'No I didn't', was my reply, in fact I'd been discarding such 'damaged' stamps for years! I joined the Perfin Society straight away and made sure I attended the London meetings in order to meet with, and talk to, as many Perfin collectors as I could. The fellow employee's name was **Tony Cornforth**, who joined the Perfin Society himself in 1986, and is still a member to this day.

Naturally I decided to collect only Line Engraved issues that bore a Railway Company Perfin, obtaining material from the Perfin Society Auction run at the time by **Peter Day**, as well as the auction run by **John Coles**, and purchases from other suppliers of G.B. Perfins. The problem was that I didn't know what there was to collect as I couldn't get hold of a copy of a G.B. Catalogue as 'Tilles' was unobtainable. Right from the start I kept my Perfins, *arranged alphabetically*, in a *loose-leaf stock book* which would help in their re-arrangement as new dies and stamps were added. The stamps with each Perfin were arranged *chronologically*.

The first change I made to my original decision was to include, for any particular railway die, *all the different denominations* throughout the reigns to show the use of the die over time. Although the stamps were in ‘serried’ ranks, a bit like pilchards in a tin, they had a ‘hand-drawn’ silhouette at the head of the row. It didn’t take long before I altered the parameters yet again, collecting *all Line Engraved issues*, regardless of having any railway interest or not. Inevitably, the hobby soon became one of collecting *all different die face* (DDF) for *every known G.B. Perfin Die* (DD).

The problem of ‘no available catalogue’ was addressed in **1986** when Tony Edwards (the then Perfin Society Catalogue Editor) and Betty Lucas, began to produce a new G.B. Catalogue, one letter at a time. It consisted essentially of silhouettes, but used an improved catalogue numbering system based on the Tilles Catalogue Number, which also allowed scope for adding new dies while maintaining the alphabetical order. When all the sections had been completed in **1991** (by me, as I became Cat Ed in the Autumn of 1989), it contained some 18,762 dies.



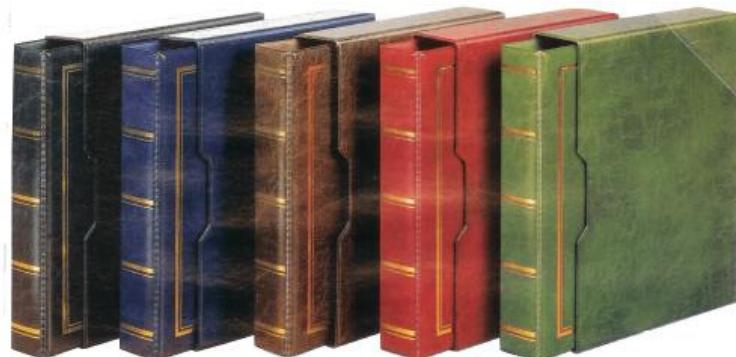
There was a time when I ‘wrote-up’ a small index card (obtained from W H Smith’s) for any ‘interesting’ dies I came across, which I kept in a special plastic index card box (again, from W H Smith’s). On the back of the card I recorded ‘salient’ details - for example, this stamp with the ‘Fancy’ 133-pin die “**H&C^oL^d**” (H1615.01M) was purchased in 1985 for the princely sum of £3.50 which equates to £12.50 today! However, that particular presentation technique proved time consuming in the extreme and was abandoned fairly early on.



I next experimented with making up a special label to head the row of stamps but that also took up too much time, and the details could so easily change. That idea soon gave way to simply cutting out the silhouette from a paper version of the catalogue.



With so many different dies to collect, and especially for those of you who decide to collect as many DDF as possible, storage becomes a problem. I've never counted them, but I guess in 'round' numbers I have some 19,400 of the known 25,352 dies (76.5%), and 130,821 of the 290,863 DDF (45%).



These I've housed in forty loose-leaf 4-ring binders in slip cases purchased over the years from the '*Arrowfile*' Deluxe Classic Albums (padded) range in various colours, using double sided, 7 pocket refill pages. ***I must stress that other suppliers are also available!***

Some collectors I know also ‘write-up’ their collections, in small part at least, surrounding the subject Perfin with background information, making it much more like an ‘article’ or even an ‘exhibit’. My 2015 “**HUTH**” exhibit resident on the Perfin Society website is a good example of this, but as it’s a **10-page** display I’ve just shown here (greatly reduced) the last page, along with a pitfall! Inevitably, as new DDFs are reported and/or new stamps are acquired, the whole display will require updating. As you can see, at the time (2015) I had 7 new stamps to add, which still haven’t been added in the intervening years, all of which ties in with the comment I made at the time - **‘I suspect there may be a long wait’!** Indeed, I doubt they will ever be ‘slotted in’.

Frederick Huth & Co.
Merchants and Merchant Bankers, 12 Tokenhouse Yard, London EC.

The sequence is completed by this single example of a King George V ‘Photogravure’ issue, introduced in 1935.



In 1936 the company was dissolved. The banking business was acquired by “*British Overseas Bank Ltd*”, and the fur business by “*C M Lampson & Co Ltd*”.

* * * * *

As with the earlier die, this later die is also known on ‘Foreign Bills’. The following examples are representative of the use on this category of material.



QV 3d



QV 2/-



QV 10/-



KEVII 5/-



KEVII 1/-

Newly acquired material awaiting incorporation into the display.
(I suspect there may be a long wait!)



Acknowledgements to:
Lars Boettger, Jack Brandt, Ian Burns (ob), Terry Comper, John Donner, Maurice Harp, John Nelson,
Jeff Turnbull, Terry Wood (ob), and Charles Jennings (publication).

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Sometimes it's better to 'home in' on a rarer die as I did for this 3-page exhibit outlining the history of Percy Dalton (born Pizer Tolkan, s/o Nathan Tolkan, a Lithuanian) and his 'Famous Roasted Peanuts'. Again, only one page has been shown here.

PERFINS of Great Britain.
'Peanuts'

Percy Dalton's 'Famous Roasted Peanuts'.

The catalyst for this piece is *Stephen Steere*, who has recently been indexing the Sloper 'A-K' Ledgers in readiness for uploading to the Perfin Society website. In the ledger he came across the entry for '*Messrs. Percy Dalton (Ldn.) Ltd*', 50/51 Brushfield St, E1, along with 'proofs' of their overprint and Perfin "PD/L^{td}" (P1622.01). I'm afraid I don't have an example on a postage stamp of the *overprint*, but I do have an example of the *Perfin*.



c1954





P1622.01

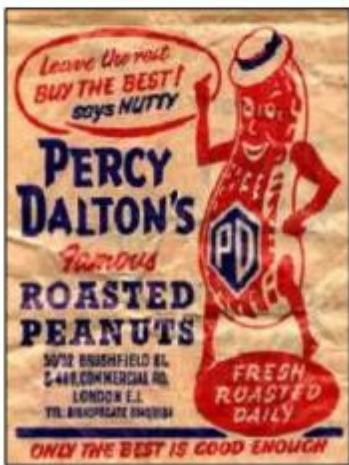


To date this is the *only stamp value* known with the Perfin, a 2½d Wilding (Tudor Crown), introduced on 5th Dec 1952. This was later replaced by the St Edwards Crown watermark on 28th Sep 1955, dating the stamp to c1954.

Inspection of the diadem shows it to be Type I with an incomplete top line, but sadly, that doesn't help in further refining the die in use date range.

Note - A 2x2 block of the 2½d Wilding is also known with the Perfin, but does anyone now know of its whereabouts? If so, I would like to hear from you!

Percy Dalton was born in Whitechapel (4th November 1908) and, aged fourteen, began work as a 'barrow boy' in a 'street market' in Stepney. He appears in Kelly's London directories as a *fruiterer* in White Horse Street (1931), and as a *fruit salesman* in Spitalfields Market (1937). In 1940 he and other family members took premises at 50-52 Brushfield Street where they traded as *fruit merchants*.



Around 1950 (so just before the use of the Perfin) Percy Dalton came up with the idea of roasting peanuts in their shells and selling them in bags at football matches. I suspect that he'd been roasting them for some time, before hitting on the idea of selling them at sporting events. At the time they sold for 6d a bag.

On a personal basis, as a schoolboy in the Midlands in the 1950's and 1960's, I must confess that I don't recall coming across *Percy Dalton's Famous Roasted Peanuts*. Were they simply a 'Southem' phenomenon, or just for 'Londoners', or conceivably in plain sight and I just didn't see them?

Often the research into the family history aspect of the subject Perfin brings you into *direct contact with a descendant*, as was the case with ...

- Percy Dalton - his son ***Michael John Dalton***.



- The 'Miss Kendall Covers' - ***Richenda Wakefield***, a distant relative of Walter Smith, Miss Kendall's eventual husband and sender of the (presumably) Love Letters.
- Edward Tancred Agius - his great-grandson, ***Peter Agius*** (see the 'Malta' Perfin Catalogue on the Perfin Society website).

1890-1905



O1710.01

There was an unexpected spin-off from the contact with ***Peter Agius*** in that he told me that Alfred Agius, (ETA's brother), became a Benedictine monk at St Augustine's College, Ramsgate. Known as ***Dom Ambrose Agius***, he was their College Bursar in 1890 and would have been responsible for introducing the Perfin "OSB" (O1710.01) at the Monastery!

The important thing to remember in all of this is that you can be a 'philatelist' **without** 'collecting stamps', and by extension, you can also be 'interested in Perfins' **without** 'collecting them'.



Or, to put a topical spin on it, you do not need to own the unique ***1c British Guiana stamp*** (which sold in June 2021 for £6 million) to write about it, and that owning a 'rare' Perfin is most certainly **not** a pre-requisite for 'waxing lyrical' on its behalf!

6. How can the life of a GB Perfin be estimated?

First off, a ‘fact’ gleaned from a 36 year study of G.B. Perfins, is that the average life of a G.B. Perfin die is **12.4 years**. This is the average of all the individual die in use date ranges estimated for each of the 25,335 (and rising) G.B. Perfin dies. But how are these *date ranges* calculated?

*‘The dates simply define the period of **actual use** of the Perfin, being the **best estimate** of when the Perfin was **first and last perforated and used** by the company/organization/individual. It’s based on a number of factors, such as the postage stamps involved, postmark evidence, and any relevant documentary evidence, etc., etc.’.*

It’s probably more useful, especially for those of you who are new to the hobby, to see the process in operation. Please remember that I’ve been compiling such information for GB Perfins for the past thirty-seven years, and data tends not to be reported in one big blob, but trickles in over time, slowly building up a picture of the use of the Perfin die.

There’s no hard and fast rule as to how this ‘footprint’ is arrived at, but it may help if I discuss an imaginary Perfin “XYZ/&C^o”, which for the purpose of the discussion we will say has been reported on an example of the ubiquitous Queen Victoria 16-dot 1d Lilac - the most Perfinned stamp in the world.

All the GB stamps and issues that a collector is likely to encounter a Perfin on (or *in* or *through* depending on which term you’re comfortable with), are covered in the section on the S158 white ‘Twister’ called ‘**GB Postage Stamps known with Perfins**’. With the exception of the very early stamp issues, each issue has been allocated a code letter, which for the QV 1d Lilac is code ‘B’.



As can be read under ‘Code B’, the 16-dot version of the stamp was issued 12th December 1881 and not replaced until 1st January 1902, after King Edward VII had become monarch. Without any more information I would have to set the die in use date range to **c1890**, which is approximately mid-range.

Let’s imagine that the next report of the die on a different stamp was on a QV Jubilee ½d (Vermilion), which is issue code ‘E’. We find that the stamp was issued 1st January 1887 and not replaced until 1st January 1902, giving us a mid-range date of **c1895**. Knowing the Perfin occurs on both stamps allows me to allocate an **1890-1895** footprint.



Let’s fast forward and see what stamps were reported towards the end of the life of this imaginary Perfin. Let’s say it was on a KGV 2½d (Dark blue) - issue ‘Q’, introduced 10th May 1937 and not replaced until 21st July 1941 in a pale blue colour. The mid-range date for the stamp is **c1939**, making the footprint **1890-1939**.



GB definitives, i.e. stamps for ‘every day use’, tend to be used for long periods before being replaced by perhaps a new watermark, a new colour, or a new monarch, whereas GB commemoratives tend to be used during the course of a few months.

Knowing that commemoratives tend to be in use ‘briefly’ in comparison to definitives, we’ll pretend that the subject Perfin was spotted on an 1840/1940 ‘Commemoration of the centenary of the introduction of the first postage stamps’, issued 6th May **1940**.



This influences the date range slightly, in that the footprint would become **1890-1940**.

I'm sure by now you get my drift as to what's happening, so I'll throw in an even *later* stamp.

The 2½d Pale blue (code 'R') mentioned earlier, was first issued 21st July 1941 and not replaced until 3rd May 1951, giving a mid range date for the use of the stamp as **c1945**, extending our footprint to **1890-1945**.



We haven't mentioned any postmark dates yet, but they are inevitably taken into account. For example the 2½d Pale blue which I've just shown you may have had a legible **23rd November 1948** postmark date which must be taken into account. It's unlikely that this would have been the very last time the Perfin was used so I usually extend it a little, in this case to **c1950**, which is just before the issue changed in 1951. And now our footprint has become **1890-1950**.

Over time a few more different stamps will be reported, perhaps on some issued *outside* the listed footprint.

Let's imagine that an earlier stamp issue is reported with the Perfin, say a QV ½d Slate-blue from the so-called 'Lilac & Green' issue, (issue code 'D'). This was issued 1st April 1884 and not replaced until 1st January 1887 by the QV ½d (Vermilion) mentioned previously. The Slate-blue stamp has a mid-range date of **c1885**, so our footprint becomes **1885-1950**.



But what else could influence the die in use date range?

- An earlier postmark date of (say) 1st October **1884** would make it **1884-1950**.
- Knowledge that the die was from a perforating press dispatched by Slopers 2nd July 1882, making it **1882-1950**. However, such intimate details as this are most unusual.

- And finally, knowledge that the company ceased trading or amalgamated etc., say sometime in June **1949**, making the footprint **1882-1949**.

All of this, of course, is where the ‘philatelic’ element comes into the hobby, the application of the ‘knowledge’ associated with studying postage stamps. Yes, the Perfins are on postage stamps, and if that’s as far as the Perfin collector wants to take it then that’s fine. But there are often clues on each stamp which can help answer the question of the **Three Ws** ...

When was it used?

Where was it used?

Who used it?

There are also more questions such as ...

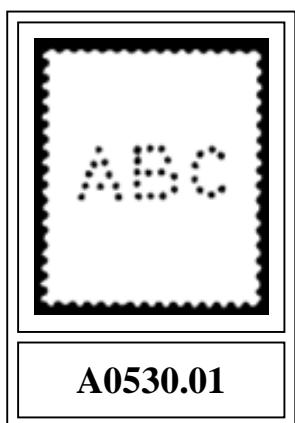
What stamps are involved?

Who made the Press/Die, (perhaps even down to the actual individual(s) involved)?

What business was the user engaged in?

That makes **Six Ws** in all, although it’s rare to answer all six!

Here is a typical entry from the GB Perfin Catalogue (‘Gault’), with just 5 of the 6 **Ws** answered.



In use: 1895-1920.
 Dates: 4 July 1900 - ... June 1916.
 Issues: B 1d (16 dots) E ½d (both)
 F ½d (both), 1d
 H ½d, 1d I(RC) ½d, 1d
 Ident: ABC Steamship Line,
 Great Yarmouth. Also at
 ‘ABC’ Wharf, King St, Norwich.
 Pmks: Great Yarmouth, ‘575’ Norwich,
 and Hull.

Where Code B are QV 1d Lilacs, code E are QV Jubilees, code F are KEVII definitives, code H are KGV Downey Heads, and Code I(RC) are KGV Typographs with Royal Cypher watermark.

7. How much is a GB Perfin worth?

The intrinsic value of a ‘stamp with holes in it’ is zero, so its value is what someone is willing to pay for it. Stamp dealers and eBay sellers have material for sale or auction, but often at inflated prices. All I can do is present a few general figures for various categories which have recently gone through the Perfin Society Auction run by **William Hall**, our Auctioneer.

Lots can consist of **individual stamps**, such as QV 1d Reds, QV Surface Printed stamps, KGV Seahorses, etc., **mini groups** such as Full Names, and single letter lots, or **bulk lots** (off-paper).

Description	Typical range per stamp
QV 1d Reds	£1.00 - £10.00
QV Line Engraved ½d, 1½d, 2d	£1.00 - £15.00
QV Surface Printed to 1/-	£0.50 - £5.00
QV High Values to £1	£5.00 - £150.00
QV General (Bulk)	£0.10 - £0.15
KEVII General (Bulk)	£0.02 - £0.10
KGV General (Bulk)	£0.05 - £0.15
KGV Seahorse	£0.50 - £1.00
KEVIII General (Bulk)	£0.05 - £0.10
KGVI General (Bulk)	£0.05 - £0.10
QEII General (Bulk)	£0.02 - £0.05
All Reigns General (Bulk)	£0.02 - £0.05
All Reigns by Initial Letter (mini group)	£0.05 - £0.20
GB Cover with identity - monarch dependant!	£0.20 - £20.00

Of course, there is no upper end limit, so on occasions, individual stamps and bulk lots may sell for considerably more. It all rather depends on how deep your pockets are! For example, if a £1 Seahorse with Perfin ever came up for auction (only **two** of which are currently known), it would likely sell for £400-£500. Even rarer (especially with a Perfin) is the QV £5 Orange, for which the whereabouts of **only one** is currently known ... see back cover.

8. How rare is any particular GB Perfin?

Some Country Catalogues issue a rarity code for each Perfin, usually resulting from some sort of survey, but for GB Perfins this has never been undertaken. However, because the individual stamps involved are recorded in the GB Perfins Catalogue, a reasonable estimate can be made of their rarity depending on the number of different DDFs listed.

Correct to 1 st January 2026			
DD = 25,352		DDF = 290,863	
DDF	Count	%	Comment
0	128	0.5%	27.0% Rare
1	3,820	15.1%	
2	2,894	11.4%	
3	2,191	8.6%	21.4% Difficult
4	1,802	7.1%	
5	1,444	5.7%	
6	1,257	5.0%	18.6% Relatively Easy
7	1,057	4.2%	
8	871	3.4%	
9	842	3.3%	
10	682	2.7%	33.0% Common
11-24	5,311	20.9%	
25-49	2,192	8.6%	
50-99	725	2.9%	
100+	136	0.5%	

As can be seen, a very small proportion (0.5%) have no stamp details, although as they are illustrated, there must have been at least one example that survived the ravages of time to enable it to be reported. At the other extreme, there's an equally small proportion (0.5%) which are incredibly bountiful with over 100 DDF recorded. {Note: three of the dies have over 200 DDF}. Indeed, over time it should be possible to create a reasonable collection of around 50% of the known GB Perfins without spending too much of your hard earned money.

9. Who invented Perfins, and Why?

It is well documented that ‘Philately’ as we know it only became possible with the introduction of the *Uniform Penny Post* effective from 10th January 1840, initiated by *Rowland Hill*, and the introduction of the iconic 1d Black and 2d Blue adhesive labels (nominally available from 1st May 1840, but not valid until 6th May 1840) cut from their imperforate, printed and gummed sheets, prior to fixing to an envelope carrying that all important communication. It was then cancelled to deter re-use, transported (probably by rail), and finally delivered to the addressee.

If we fast forward to the **1860s**, it was still possible to redeem unused postage stamps (in multiples of two or more with the gum still intact) at a General Post Office for their face value, less a small handling charge of 2½% (with a ½d minimum). Inevitably this provided a potential source of extra income for the lowly paid ‘streetwise’ junior clerks employed in the burgeoning commercial sector of the UK economy.

A typical working week consisted of 10 hour days, 6 days a week, for which the clerks probably received as little as five or six shillings a week, so by purloining a couple of 1d stamps every now and again when the opportunity arose, they could supplement their earnings by as much as 10%. However, the individuals concerned wouldn’t have gone to the General Post Office and exchanged their ill gotten gains there for cash, instead they (almost certainly a ‘he’) would have gone to a local ‘sympathetic’ grocer and exchanged the stamps for consumables such as a wedge of cheese or a flagon of Porter.

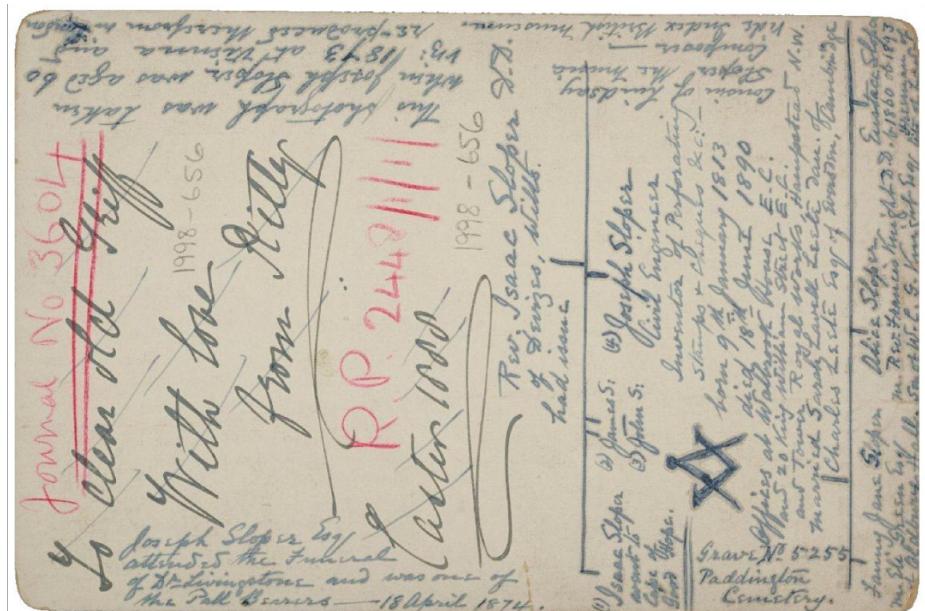
To deter ‘theft’ of mint postage stamps, a certain *Joseph Sloper* (1813-1890), Painter and Decorator turned Inventor, applied to the Postmaster General for permission to perforate stamps (using his own patent) with the initials of the firm owning them. He was eventually, and somewhat unenthusiastically, given permission to do so in a letter dated **13th March 1868**. To support the process, the General Post Office also agreed not to redeem any postage stamps ‘initialled’ in this way.



Here we see *Joseph Sloper* as a 60 year old on his Carte de Visite
{© The Science Museum, London}.

We believe the photograph was taken in Vienna in **1873** when he almost certainly attended the World Fair being held there.

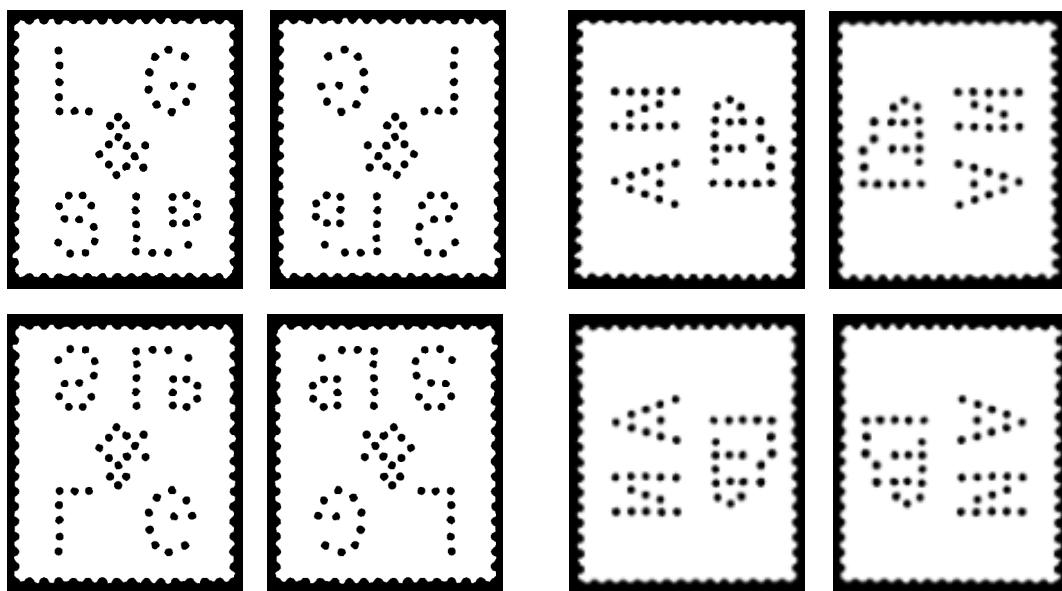
The back of the card, we've recently found out, contains a wealth of information - but that's another story!



10. Are Perfin Orientations significant?

There are two possible sources of Perfins available to any particular organisation ... those produced *on their own perforating press*, and those produced by a *supplier* of 'initialled' stamps. There were a number of firms supplying 'initialled' stamps after the patent taken out by Joseph Sloper expired in 1872, but there appears to have been an un-written rule that 'initialled' stamps *supplied by a supplier* were always (well, almost always) perforated from the front of the stamp with the monarch's head upright.

In contrast, the job of 'initialling' the stamps purchased by a company using *their own perforating press* was often delegated to the 'office junior' who probably had no interest in the task and regarded it as a chore. Consequently, he/she would have folded the sheet(s) of stamps, probably both horizontally and vertically, prior to perforating and so greatly reduce the time taken. The result would be an even mix of *upright*, *reversed*, *inverted*, and *inverted-reversed* examples, as shown below.

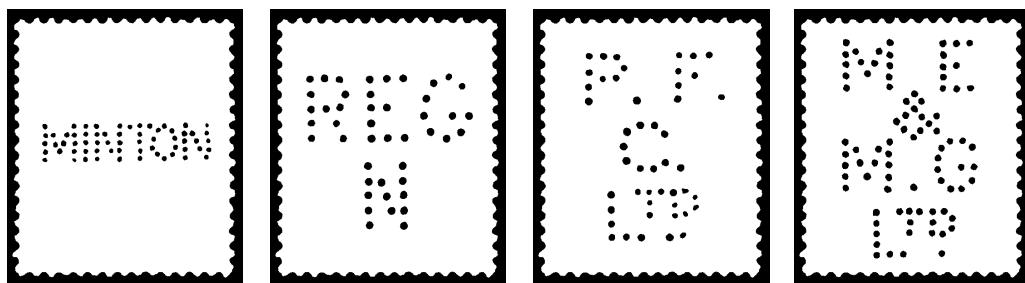


A similar set is shown for Perfins that normally appear sideways.

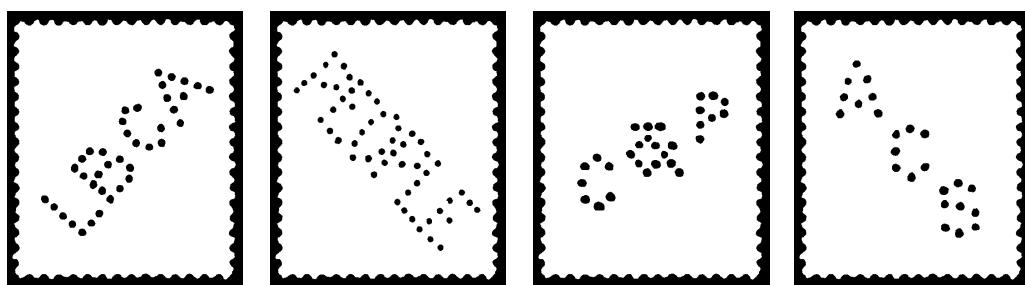
Some country catalogues (notably Canada) record in great detail which of these 8 orientations can be found for each Perfin, but once you understand how they come about you can judge for yourselves their relevance.

Mention has already been made of *upright* and *sideways* Perfins, but there are other orientations that can be found on GB Perfins.

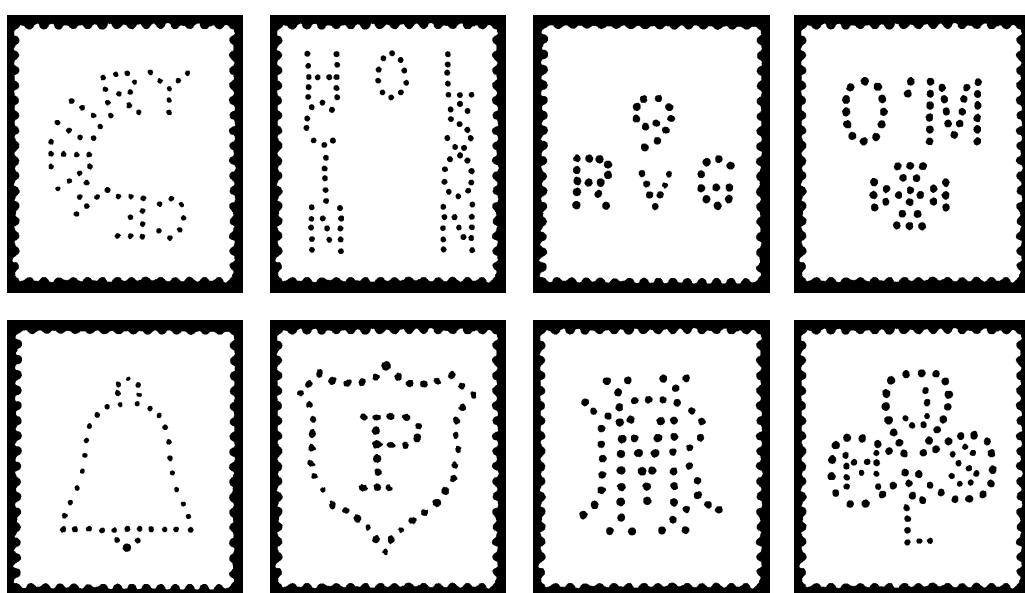
First we see *upright* Perfins consisting of 1, 2, 3 and 4 lines. A similar set could be shown for Perfins that normally appear *sideways*, although they only exist in either 1 or 2 line formats.



Next we see two examples of '*diagonal*' Perfins, one up and one down, followed by two examples of '*staggered*' Perfins, rising and descending, in which the individual letters are upright.



And then there are those with letters forming a *curve*, or working their way around the *periphery*, as well as others using *numbers*, *monograms*, and *fancy designs* ...



11. What are Partials?

While the overall objective is to create a legible set of initials centrally on the stamp, very often part of the Perfin will fall onto a neighbouring stamp causing a **partial**, particularly where the use of a ‘company owned’ press is involved. The clue that the Perfin *might* be a partial is its proximity to the edge of the stamp.

Here we have two examples of what looks like a “B.C.” Perfin.



Now, there is a spreadsheet available which lists all known GB Perfins, and a traditional electronic search of it, in this case, yields a mercifully short list of just two Perfins to inspect!

Find and Replace					
Find		Replace			
Find what:				/B.C.	
Book	Sheet	Name	Cell	Value	Formula
0-GB Perfins.xls	All Dies		\$D\$175	A./B.C.	
0-GB Perfins.xls	All Dies		\$D\$13629	L.B./B.C.	

2 cell(s) found

Here we see a full strike, and another more obvious ‘partial’.



12. What Topics or Themes can be collected?

Many different Perfin themes can be studied and collected. For example: 'Railways', 'Graphites', 'Local Government', 'Banking', 'Curved Perfins', 'Full Names', 'Regional Issues', 'Hospitals & Allied Trades', 'Shipping', the 'Legal Profession', 'Monograms', 'Cycles and Automobiles', 'Brewing', ... The list is endless, but here are a few images suggesting possible themes.



The Perfin Society ...

Although Perfins were introduced by Joseph Sloper in **1868** it was many years before they were recognised as worthy of study by collectors. For a long time most collectors regarded them as damaged stamps and destroyed them (me included). Fortunately, this attitude has changed in recent years. Of note is the fact that there is evidence of a **Charles Vincent Blackburn** (1857-1944) compiling a '*Special Check-list of US Perfs*' in the U.S.A. as early as June **1911**, just over 3 years after their use was officially sanctioned in April 1908. And even earlier than that we have **Walter Morley** (1863-1936) publishing a serialised listing of GB QV 1d Reds with Firms' Initials in **1902/3**.

A handful of collectors studied GB Perfins in the 1930-1950 period, notably Hugh Vallency (who published two short monographs, one in **1933**, and the other in **1948**), **Dr Rendall**, and **Charles Bein** who corresponded with other collectors chiefly in the U.S.A. After World War II, a few GB Perfin enthusiasts began corresponding with one another, but after **Charles Jennings** had a two-part article about Perfins published in Stamp Collecting (in **1956**) more information was requested. They were directed to **Ron Bowman** who had already been selected as the contact person for their small group. In 1957 the number of correspondents had risen to twenty and in July **1957** they founded the Society we know today.

The original name was the '*GB Perfin Study Group*', but at the end of **1963** it became the '*Security Endorsement & Perfin Society of GB*'. This title was adopted almost entirely at the insistence of the then President, Charles Jennings, who maintained that overprints and underprints were the predecessors of Perfins and should therefore be included in the title. However, at the London meeting held in November **1983** it was decided that the simpler, less verbose title of '*The Perfin Society*' should be adopted. The stated aims of the Society are the study of all aspects of Perfins, comprising ...

The identification of users, the recording of dies and their periods of use, all of which is to be published in the form of lists, catalogues, and monographs as appropriate.

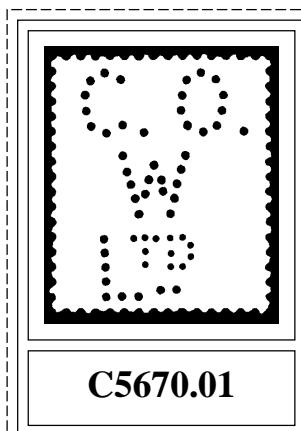
The ‘GB Perfins Catalogue’ ...

Compiled by the Catalogue Editor, *Roy Gault*, over a period of more than three decades (over six decades if its predecessors are included), the ‘Gault Catalogue of GB Perfins’ is available as an e-Catalogue from *The Perfins Society*, supplied as a pdf on an 8Gb USB ‘Twister’.

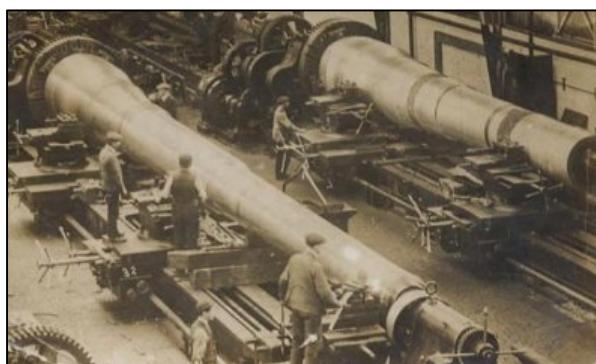
Shown alongside is the white ‘Twister’ issued on 13th March **2026**. The next planned update will be in March 2030.



Here is a typical catalogue entry ...



In use: 1905-1918.
Dates: 20 Sep 1905 - 23 Mar 1915.
Issues: F ½d (ye-gn), 1d, 2d-3d, 6d
H 1d
I(RC) 1d-4d
Ident: Ø Coventry Ordnance Works
Ltd, Coventry. {Opened in
1905, the site was acquired by
English Electric in 1918, and
sold on in 1919}.
Pmks: Coventry.



Naval guns being machined at the Coventry Ordnance Works.

To save space, stamp issues are referenced using code letters.
e.g. issue ‘F’ are KEVII definitives, ‘H’ are KGV Downey Heads, and
I(RC) are KGV Typographs (with Royal Cypher watermark).
Ø Signifies a *suspected* user.

The Perfin Society Bulletin ...

The Bulletin (and its predecessor) has always been the major means of dissemination of information amongst members. Currently, the Bulletin consists of 64 full colour pages in A5 format, and is prepared by the editor, **Maurice Harp**. It is professionally printed by **TradePrint** in Sheffield, and can be received in paper form as well as an electronic pdf document. A new edition comes out every two months.



The Perfin Society Auction ...

Usually three or four Auctions are held each year by our Auctioneer, **William Hall**, containing a wide range of GB and World-wide material, including specialised items, mini collections, and bulk lots. There is always something there for the 'beginner', 'intermediate', and 'experienced' collector. A typical Auction will contain around 450 lots, with most lots accompanied by an illustration. It's always good to catch sight of what you're bidding on!

The Perfin Society Website ...



The original website, set up in 2001, was replaced in 2021 with www.perfinsoc.org.uk. It contains Articles, Exhibits, Auction Results, Publications, On-line Catalogues, Surveys, and a Library, along with Links to other Perfin Clubs & Societies, Perfin Sites, General Philatelic Sites, and Resources. Our webmaster, **Alastair Walter**, has recently added a 'Members only' area, and a 'Research Corner'.



‘Little and Large’.



A typical ‘Customer’ Press.

Why not join us?

Visit the *Perfin Society* website for more details: www.perfinsoc.org.uk
Alternatively, write to our Secretary: **Stephen Steere**
1 Nicolson Road, Orpington BR5 4EH.