

MORE FROM THE PO ARCHIVES

By Dave Hill

Post 30 file 652 caught my eye: it was headed "*Purchase of Stamps from the Public* " but had no reference to perfins. However I thought it worth recording as background information which touches on our hobby.

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Sir Rowland Hill first prohibited the purchase of stamps from the public in 1850. I do not think his idea at that time was to stop the postage stamp being used to buy small things through the post. In these early Victorian times all kinds of people could buy stamps at various discounts. This enabled some postmasters to buy stamps cheaper from a third party than they could from the Stamp Office. It is this I till was trying to stop.

In 1855 the prohibition was withdrawn in London and was gradually extended to the whole country, subject to a 214% commission and the stamps were to be in joined pairs or more. Stamps as payment became more and more used, especially by the popular press. The tabloid press of the day took many thousands of single stamps in payment for services * advertised in their papers. It seems that there was some kind of licence necessary to change these single stamps for cash. More research is needed to confirm this. (Some postal historian member may know.)

With the advent of Money Orders, a new service offered by the Post Office, it was proposed in 1871 to once again ban the exchange of unused stamps for cash. However, this caused such an outcry that the ban was not proceeded with.

Of course, by this time, Sloper had adapted his invention of security perforations to stamps (1868). Whilst ordinary business firms could be protected from theft by employees by using perforated stamps or perforating stamps they received in payment, these newspapers could not. They could not use all the stamps they received, so they had to leave them unperforated and change them for cash at the P.O. In this state they were fair game for the thief.

The list that follows is appended to the file. It is the name of firms who had stamps stolen from them. Many of those named became perforated users for obvious reasons, the perforations of the remainder may yet be discovered.

Longman & Co< Allen & Hanbury< Marlborough & Co? Pain Bros, Hastings? Hennington & Hollis? London School Board< C & G Smith? Ind Coope< Licensed Victuallers Central Protection Society? Hulton & Co, Manchester? Islington Vestry< W H Everett & Son< A Lee & Sons, Sheffield? London Tilbury & Southend Railway< Mr H Cox, Bream Buildings? Messrs Barnard, Lambeth Walk? [< known perforated users]