

BOARD OF TRADE PERFINS

by John Nelson

With the assistance of several members of the Society, I have been able to increase the number of recorded Board of Trade perfin 'forgeries' to thirty (see illustration). These include, at numbers 25-30, six of the 'fake' dies illustrated in *GB Official Perfins* which were not featured among those which I numbered 1-16 in Part 2 of my article which appeared in Bulletin 294. It will be seen that at No. 31 we have a second die with the extra stop, examples of which come from the USA, on the QV 1d Venetian red and the ½d green of 1880.

For the forgery theory to be credible therefore, one has to believe that there were at least thirty forgers at work but how exactly did they get their profits out of the philatelic market? Did they work in collusion with thirty crooked or gullible stamp dealers or did they sell directly to gullible philatelists? If it was the latter then it does not say much for the expertise of the specialist collectors of departmental officials who alone might have been interested.

As I have shown in previous articles, it is not difficult to shoot holes in the forgery theory promoted by Captain H.T.Jackson. His claim to have discovered the Board of Trade 'forgeries' however is not sustainable since they were briefly referred to by Gordan Ward MD in a paper presented to the Philatelic Congress at Cambridge in 1926 (Bulletin 260). The difficulty lies in establishing the true source of all those different BofT dies and here, for some unwitting assistance, I have to thank Dave Hill.

In his article *The Maker of the 'SPG' Type Die* (Bulletin 293), Dave demonstrated in a totally convincing way that the SPG die, and the considerable number of other dies of a similar type, were made by Waterlow & Sons, Limited. I am grateful to him for having, at the same time, set me thinking along the lines that Waterlows could very well be the 'missing link' in the case of the so called Board of Trade 'forgeries'. What I am suggesting is that the Board, having the need for a regular and substantial supply of perfins, may have acquired them from two sources. All those which are Die 1 they perforated on their own press. All the so called 'forgeries' were perforated to order on their behalf by Waterlows.

What first struck me was that at the foot of their 1891 advertisement, reproduced on page 21 of Bulletin 293, Waterlows specified 49 & 50 Parliament St., Westminster, as one of the two London branches at which their stamp perforating service was available. Among those known to be their regular clients in the locality were Grindlay & Co at 55 Parliament St; Norwich Union Fire and Life Insurance Societies, 1 Victoria St; Norton, Rose, Norton & Co, 10 Victoria St and the Society for the Propagation of The Gospel in Foreign Parts, 16 Delahaye St, the latter of course using the initials SPG.

Also within a stone's throw of 49 & 50 Parliament St. stood the principal office of the Board of Trade at 7 Whitehall Gardens and also the offices of several of its departments including the Labour Department at 44 Parliament St. For the purchase of a stamp perforating press or having regular supplies of stamps perforated to order, it is reasonable to expect that the Board of Trade would have made use of the services of Waterlow & Sons, who were on their doorstep, in preference to going to any other firm, notably Sloper some distance away in the City.

It is altogether possible therefore that the so called Board of Trade forgeries were nothing more sinister than stamps perforated by Waterlows for the Board in the normal course of business. The actual stamps may not have been supplied by Waterlows but obtained by the Board of Trade from the Post Office and taken by civil servants to Waterlows to be perforated, perhaps even on a 'while you wait' basis.

I do not think the many Board of Trade dies were assembled by joining together a crown and two letters in a manner similar to that used with the 'SPG' type dies. In my opinion they were more likely to have been single dies constructed by several different die makers employed by Waterlows. The standard of workmanship of some of those die makers was so poor that in many cases their dies have the appearance of having been drilled without the use of proper templates. These same workmen would also have been responsible for the inconsistency in shape and size of the letters used in the 'SPG' type dies.

There are one or two other indicators to the possible involvement of Waterlow & Sons including the probability that, as one of London's leading firms of law stationers, it was they who supplied various

departments of the High Court with perforating presses in which they incorporated the same style of crown as that on the Board of Trade's perfin.

I am in touch with the Waterlow Study Circle to ascertain whether any of their members have knowledge of or access to old records of the Company which might lend support to what I am suggesting. Contributions from any quarter, favourable or not, will be very welcome.

