

In March this year (1999) I saw a piece in the business section of the Daily Mail, by David Morris, about the founder of BP. As is my wont I cut out the piece for future reference for my cover collection. I wrote to the Daily Mail asking permission to reprint the gist of the article but have had no reply. In view of the query by Stephen Steere, on the previous page of this Bulletin, it seems right to reprint here, having waited in vain for four months to hear from the Daily Mail.

"BP was founded in 1901 as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company by William Knox D'Arcy, an adventurer, who returned to his native Britain after making his fortune in the rough and tough goldfields of Australia.

"He had been asked by the Admiralty to find supplies of oil for the gigantic British fleet. He did a deal with the then Shah of Persia, who in exchange for £20,000 and a slice of the revenues, signed away most of his country's oil rights to Britain.

"Knox D'Arcy secured for Britain the oil it needed to fuel its World War I battleships - so that they could out-run and out-fight the Kaiser's coal-fired vessels.

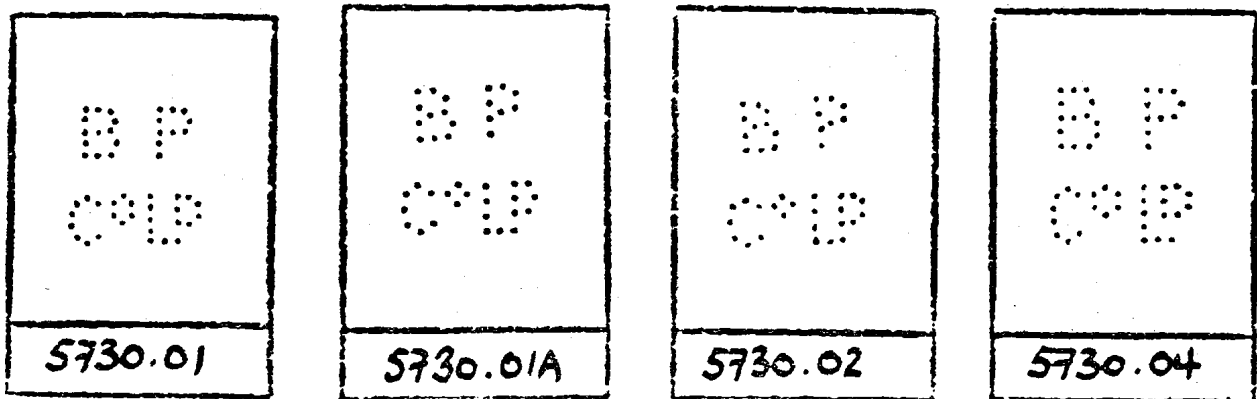
"The entrepreneur, with a taste for race horses and beautiful mistresses, was born in 1849, the son of a solicitor of modest means. At 17, he was in Australia prospecting for gold, and by the age of 40 he had returned to England with a £1 million, the equivalent of £50 million today.

"But by 1908, Knox D'Arcy was down to his last £100,000 - due to his high living and huge oil exploration costs - and the British Government had to buy a minority stake in the company to bail him out. He died in 1917, aged 67, never having received the knighthood many believed he deserved.

"Anglo-Persian became British Petroleum in 1922. It was later nationalised, but was privatised again in 1987. It faced a crisis in the early 90's, with plunging profits. But its bosses launched a major restructuring and pruning of jobs."

The reason for the interest in BP in March was because of its expected announcement, the next day, that BP was to take over a U.S. rival, Atlantic Richfield, only three months after acquiring Amoco, another U.S. giant. This would mean that BP Amoco would overtake the present leader, Exxon-Mobil, known in Britain as Esso, for daily crude oil production.

Esso of course had their own perfin but I will only detail those perfins with a BP connection. Our catalogues show 4 British Petroleum Company Limited perfins:- BP/C°Ld B5730.01, .01 A, .02 and .04. All known used in London but the last two also at Eccles, Manchester. There are three or four more possible dies used by BP and if you have a BP cover which does not fit these four, please send to Roy. .01 used 1905-25; .01A 1925-30; .02 c1925; .04 1920-25.



The perfin SM/BP has 3 positive identities with Shell-Mex & British Petroleum Ltd; S4810.01M, .01aM, .01c: .01bM is only a probable at the moment. .01M used 1945-65; .01aM 1930-39; .01bM 1930-39; .01c 1935-39. S4810.01d has no identity as yet. The S and M are slightly wider apart. Can you check your covers to see if this can be identified?

