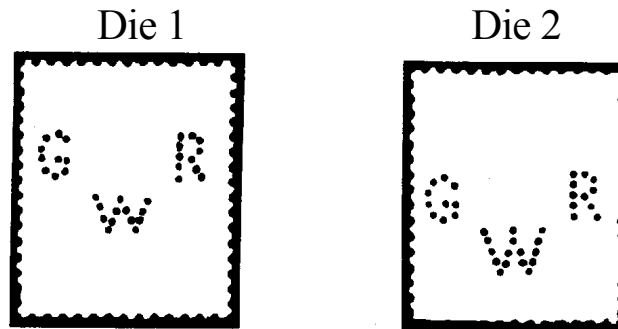


MORE DISCOVERIES ON EARLY GWR DIES.

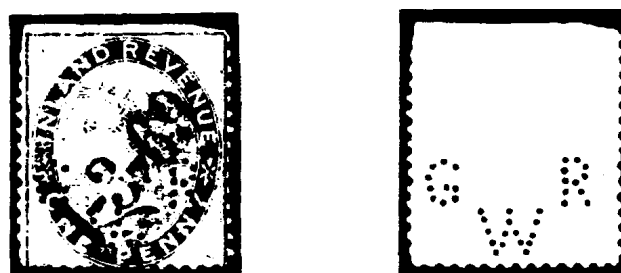
Roy Gault

The Great Western Railway was amongst the earliest users of Perfins to deter pilfering of their postage stamps. Two GWR dies are listed in Ron Bowman's "Railway Perfins of Great Britain" as having been used on the line engraved issues of Queen Victoria.



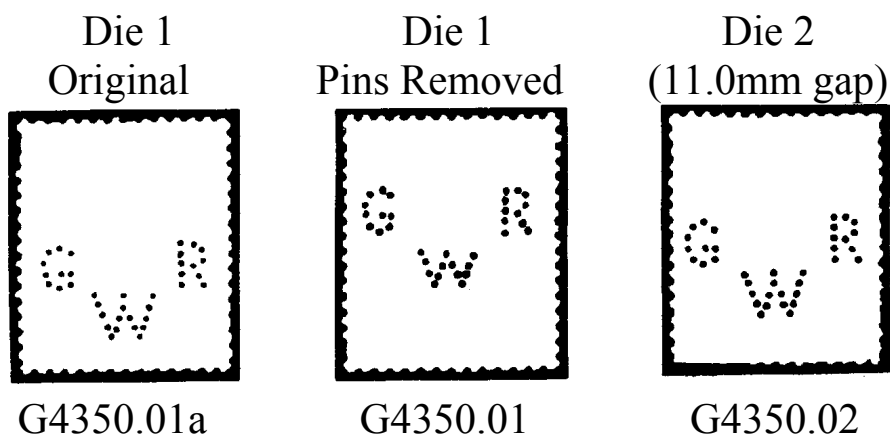
Die 1 shows an 'ugly' 13 pin 'W', whereas Die 2 shows a conventional 16 pin version. However, the situation is further complicated because two (Paul Redmond reports three) distinct variations in overall widths have been reported on Die 2 - 10.0mm and 11.0mm spacing between the letters 'G' and 'R'.

I have long suspected that the 10.0mm version of Die 2 is, in reality, the original condition of Die 1, which also has a 10.0mm gap. Then, at some point in time, pins were removed from the 'W' to leave a rather short 13 pin 'W'. This suspicion has taken on more weight recently by the reporting of an early dated example by Gerry Soutar on an Inland Revenue 1d (Die 1 - SG F19), illustrated below.



I have a horizontal joined pair of Die 1 showing the 13 pin 'W', postmarked "118" Dunkeld 18 June 1871, in which minor differences indicate a multi-headed die. The earliest recorded date for Die 1 in Bowman is 1 Jan 1870 so presumably pin removal took place sometime between March and December 1869. The pins are noticeably finer in Die 1 compared to those in Die 2, which may have contributed to possible pin damage necessitating removal.

I've allocated the catalogue number G4350.01a to the original condition of Die 1, i.e. with a 10.0mm gap between the letters 'G' and 'R' but with a 16 pin 'W'. All three 'dies' are illustrated below.



Die 1 has been reported on 53 different Id Red plates in the range 94-213, whereas Die 2 is recorded on 134 plates, ranging between 72 and 225. However, in light of the above discovery, it is highly likely that many of the low plate numbers reported as Die 2 (say prior to plate 136) should now be re-assessed. Collectors are invited to send me details of their holdings of these particular dies especially where dated examples are involved. This kind of information would help to confirm (or demolish!) my belief that G4350.01/01a are different conditions of the same die. We may even be lucky and pinpoint the "conversion" date more precisely than "sometime during 1869". To start the ball rolling I can report the following:

Die 1 (G4350.01a - 16 pin 'W' and 10.0mm gap)

Plates 76, 111, 114, 118, 119

Die 1 (G4350.01 - 13 pin 'W' and 10.0mm gap)

Plates 109, 112 (18 June 1871), 135, 155

Die 2 (G4350.02 - 16 pin 'W' and 11.0mm gap)

Plates 124, 135 (8 Apr 1872), 138, 145, 148, 155, 158, 163, 186

Finally, both dies would have been made c 1868/9 by Joseph Sloper & Co (during his monopoly period 1868-1872) to initial stamps on their own premises on behalf of the Great Western Railway. No mention of either die has yet been found in the Sloper records.