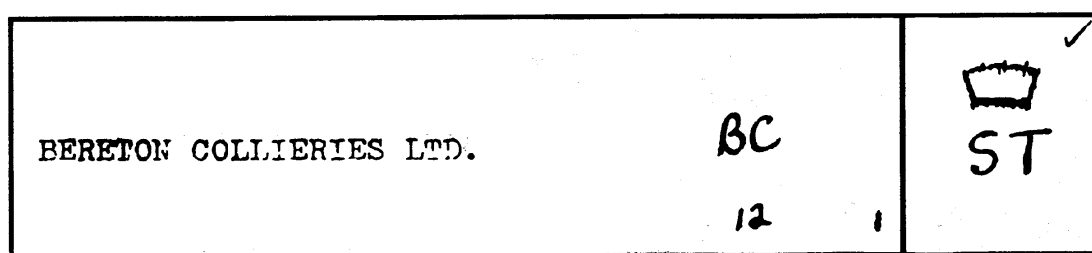


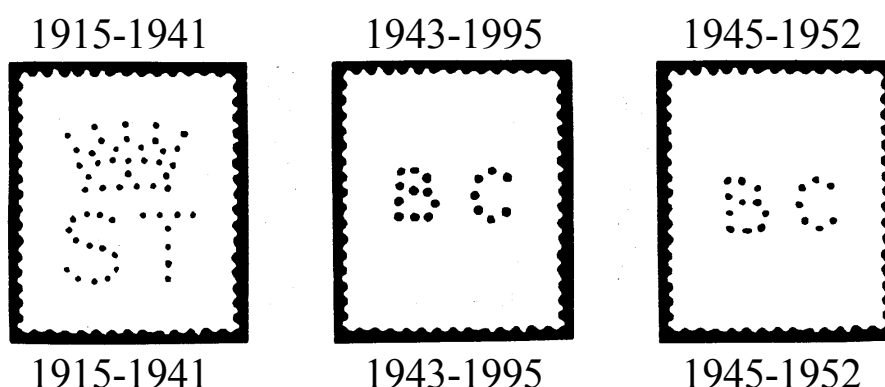
THE DEMISE OF SLOPER'S "FANCY" DIES.

Roy Gault

Amongst the 23,000 or so perfin patterns to be found on G.B. stamps are a few "fancies" involving curved lettering, crowns, coats of arms and the like. Some of these are known to have been the products of J Sloper & Co and believed destroyed in the "Blitz" on Sloper's premises in May 1941 (precise date yet to be confirmed). The Society is fortunate in owning the Sloper pre-War "manuscript" ledger, which not only documents the dies but also provides much useful information. The following illustration taken from the ledger is typical of the entries.

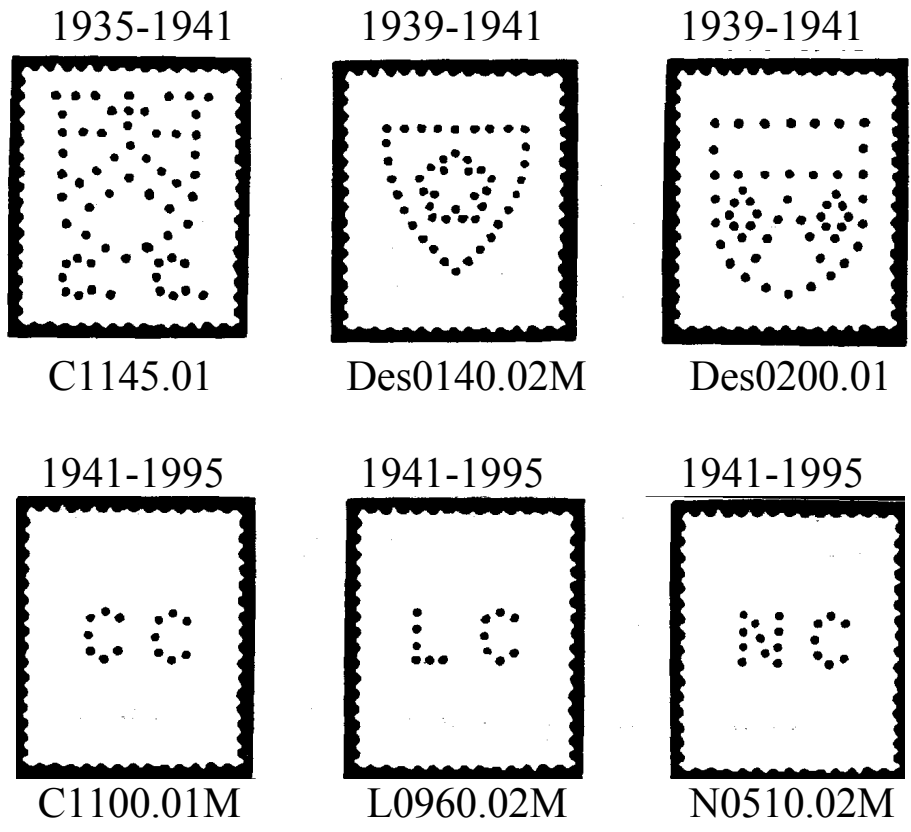


Here we see the lovely "Crown over ST" perfin used by Bereton Collieries Ltd has been replaced by the less inspiring "BC" letter combination. The figure "1" signifies that the "Crown over ST" die was single headed (i.e. only produced one pattern), and the "12" that "BC" was multi-headed, almost certainly 12x1 (i.e. twelve patterns in one horizontal line).

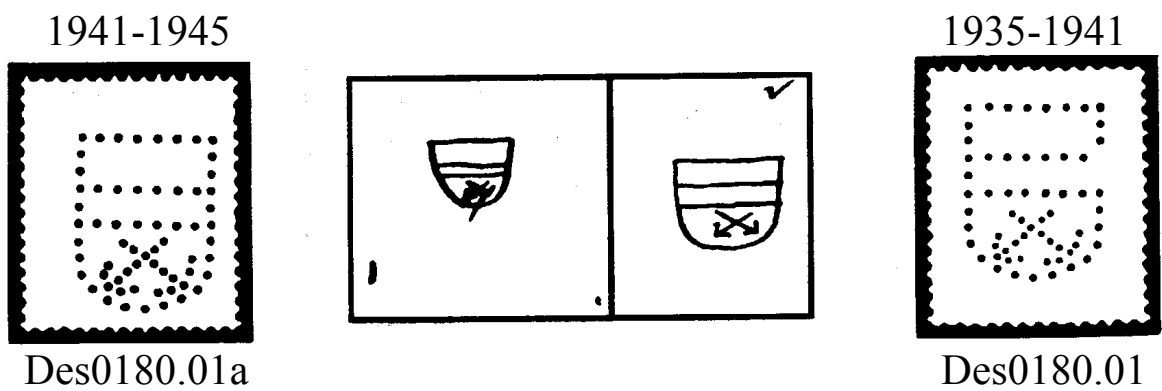


Unfortunately, the replacement die "BC" (B1110.03M or 03a) was used by Slopers to initial stamps of many organisations making loose stamps difficult to assign to a particular user. However, a Rugeley, Great Haywood or Stafford postmark would be expected if used by the Bereton Collieries Ltd - none have been reported to date.

The following "Coats of Arms" of Cheltenham, Leicester, and Nuneaton were all replaced by the letter combinations "CC", "LC" and "NC", all 12x1 multiheaded dies. As before, the dies were also used to initial stamps for other companies so postmark evidence would be necessary to assign loose stamps to individual users.

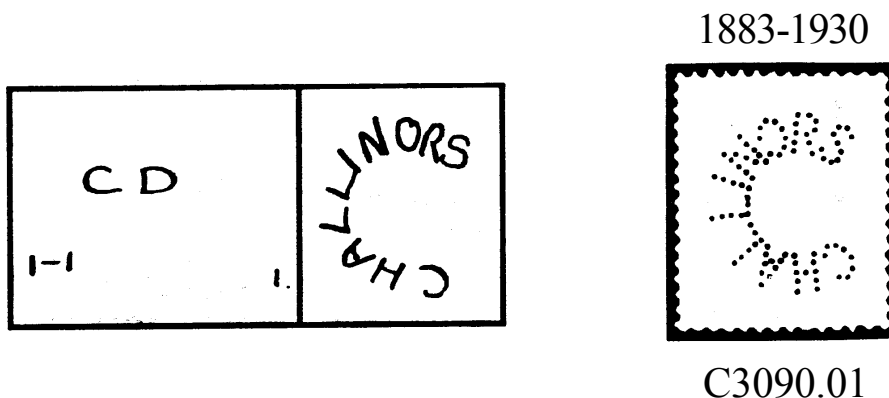


The exception was Morley Corporation where the m/s ledger entry indicates the use of a single headed die showing the coat of arms.



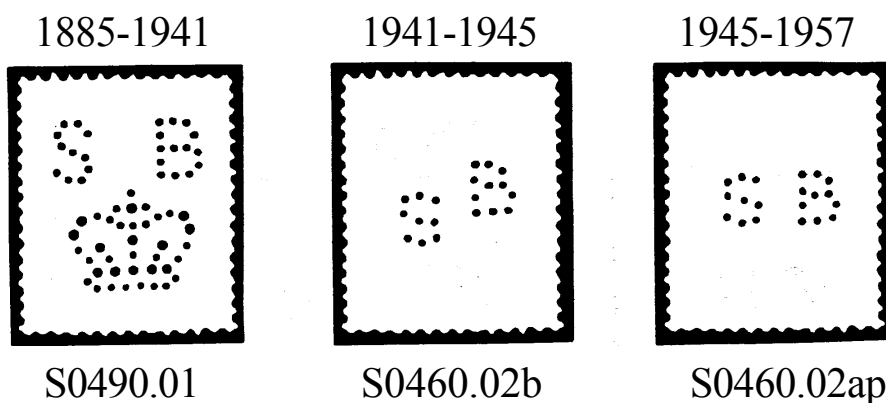
Was a new die made or did the original survive the bombs to be refurbished and used for a short time? Only one stamp has been reported with the Morley shield (Ola) on the GVI light colour issue.

The four "Coat of Arms" dies shown previously were relatively new when they were destroyed having only been made during the mid to late 1930s. Inevitably, many of the Sloper dies would have been much older. Take, for example, the dies used for Challinors, Solicitors in Hanley, Staffs, (later Challinors & Dixon), and Stringer Brothers, Iron & Steel Stockholders, West Bromwich. These two also differ from the preceding dies in that an intermediate "Wartime Provisional" was involved, indicated by the "1-1" against "CD".



The m/s ledger lists two intended users of the Wartime Provisional "CD" (C2010.01p), but no postmark information is to hand to confirm whether or not Challinors & Dixon actually used it.

There were also two users of the Wartime Provisional "SB", but this time West Bromwich postmarks point to its use by Stringer Brothers.



The standard "SB" die (S0460.02b) appears to have been used solely for Stringer Brothers, neatly completing a sequence from 1885-1957.

As catalogue editor, I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has information that helps refine (or contradict) the stated date ranges.