

SEEN IN AUCTION - 1870 Newspaper Cutting

Rosemary Smith

DAVID SCOTT & TONY LOVELL sent me a Phillips Auction Catalogue for the Feb.22nd 2001 sale. A section of the auction was for complete examples of *The Times Newspaper with interesting philatelic references.*

One lot offered was The Times for Oct. 14th 1870. The lot is described thus:-

On Page 11 col.3: An important article entitled 'Stealing Postage Stamps'. It is suggested to the Postmaster, that stamps with initials perforated into them should be sold to ensure security. However, firms with identical letters should be avoided. These were the beginning of the introduction of perfins. Est £600-700.

This estimate does not include Buyers Premium or VAT.

[Since typing out the above, I have been informed that the selling price was £500. Presumably Buyers Premium and VAT on top.]

In the auction catalogue is a photocopy of the article in the newspaper of Oct. 14th 1870. As I have been unable to find a copy of this article in a past Bulletin, despite the use of the excellent Index produced by Maurice Harp, I will produce it here as it makes interesting reading. I am conversant with this article and annoyed that I cannot put my hand on the source of my knowledge. It does not appear in Vallancey's 1933 booklet, in Slopers 5 Reign's booklet of 1939 nor in John Nelson's 1967 'Handbook of British Perfins'. (The latter two still obtainable from the Publications Officer.)

The article is headed, "*STEALING POSTAGE STAMPS*".

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir, - In your report, on the 5th inst, of this case, before the Lord Mayor, at the Mansion-house, Mr. Olney, one of the prosecutors in the case, in reply to a remark made by his lordship as to perforating the initials on stamps, agreed that the system was very advantageous, but said the cost would be considerable. Mr Olney suggested that the Post-Office should sell stamps perforated with the letters of the alphabet, to be bought by firms requiring such a safeguard. As I have a special licence and authority from the Post-master General to carry out this system for the protection of the public, in accordance with my proposition made to the Government for that purpose, I shall feel much obliged if you will allow me to state in your columns that the expense is inconsiderable, and that it works in the most satisfactory manner to all parties who have adopted it, and which is now in extensive operation. The plan of perforating the stamps with the letters of the alphabet would, if acted upon, defeat one chief feature in the working of this system, as many firms would require the same letters, and in that case there would be no identity, and the security greatly lessened.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Oct. 13.

JOSEPH SLOPER

