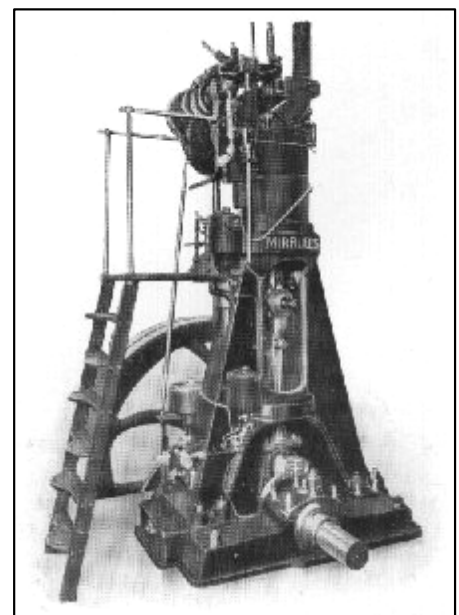


"**Mirrlees**" diesel engines are famous worldwide, but what is their history and inter-relationships with other engine manufacturers?

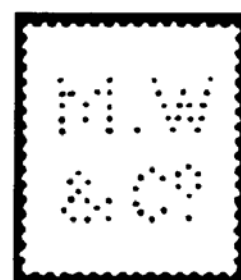
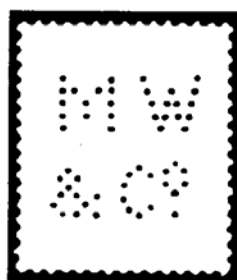
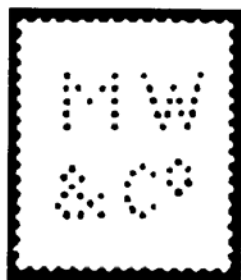
The roots of the company go back to 1840 when three brothers, Peter, William and Andrew McOnie, set themselves up in Glasgow to manufacture sugar cane processing machinery. Through a procession of partners and at least six name changes, the company was registered in 1889 as Mirrlees, Watson & Yaryan Co Ltd.

During the 1890's the company became involved in the development of the diesel engine, invented in 1892 by Dr Rudolf Diesel. In 1897, under license, they built only the third diesel engine in the world.



In 1898 the company was reconstructed yet again becoming "*Mirrlees, Watson & Co Ltd*", with Charles Day as the general manager. It was he who developed engine manufacture at the Glasgow works, but more of him later.

Although unconfirmed, the following perfins are thought to have been used by the company during this period based on the initials used and the Glasgow postmarks. Considerable variation, especially in having stops or not, can be found as the three illustrations show.

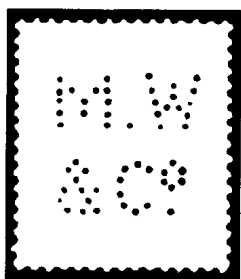


1900 – 1910

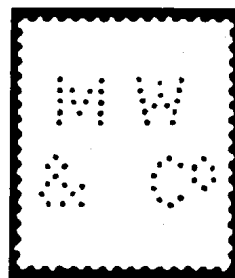
Noteworthy is the first use of a "Mirrlees" diesel engine by the Royal Navy as an auxiliary power supply on the WW1 battleship *HMS Dreadnought*.

The years 1907/8 are significant in the history of the company, for they mark the formation of "Mirrlees, Bickerton & Day Ltd" and the building of a brand new factory at Hazel Grove, Cheshire - see later.

The Glasgow works continued in production, and also continued to use perfin as a protection against theft using three more dies. Although this first one is as yet unconfirmed, it is similar to the preceding dies, and also has Glasgow postmarks.



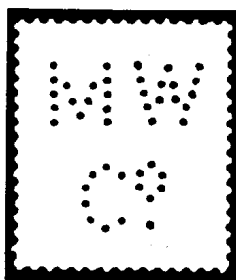
1910-1912



1925-1930

The company went into voluntary liquidation in May 1926, but its undertakings and 'certain assets' were taken over by "Mirrlees, Bickerton & Day Ltd". The Glasgow plant continued to operate under the same name, "*Mirrlees, Watson & Co Ltd*".

The most common of all the "Mirrlees, Watson" dies is this last one, in use for around 35 years. Of interest is its use on Scottish Regionals, but by the 1960's the die was in poor shape and strikes are usually blind. The die is believed to have been multiheaded.



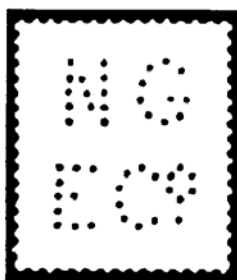
1930-1965

Now we take a look at another type of engine, in particular the gas engine as developed by the "*National Gas Engine Co Ltd*", later to become the "National Gas and Oil Engine Co Ltd". Having said that, the company was always referred to simply as "The National".

The company was founded in 1889 by two engineers, Henry Neild Bickerton (1858-1929) and (later Sir) Dugald Clerk, (1854-1932), both leading lights where internal combustion engines were concerned. They occupied the works in Wellington St, Ashton-under-Lyne, used previously by Isaac Watt Boulton to make his industrial steam locomotives. Production centred on 'gas' engines running on town gas for use in small workshops, and factories.



Although presented here as an unconfirmed identity, the company appears to have used perfins for a brief period at least, as evidenced by the following die known with Ashton-under-Lyne postmarks.



1895-1915

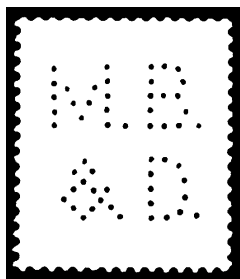
They became part of the "Brush Group" in 1950, but the factory had closed by the early 1970's.

Now we bring together Charles Day and Henry Neild Bickerton!

*"Mirrlees, Bickerton & Day Ltd"* were registered in 1907, and a factory built at Hazel Grove, near Stockport in Cheshire, specifically to make diesel engines.

The company was formed by Charles Day, then Chairman of Mirrlees, Watson & Co Ltd, Glasgow, and Henry Neild Bickerton of the National Gas Engine Co Ltd, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire. The new factory opened in October 1908.

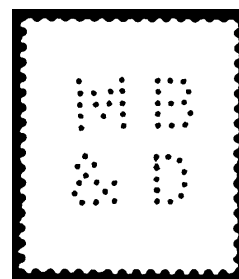
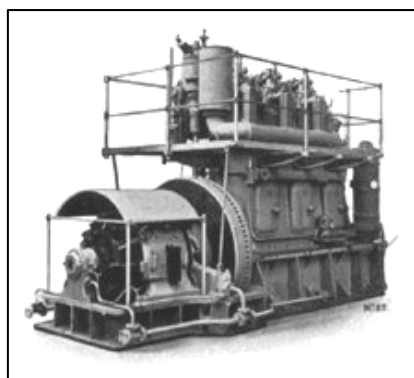
The tradition for using perfins seems to have been established from the outset. Although as yet unconfirmed, this first die was probably used by the company based on Hazel Grove & Stockport postmarks.



1908-1920



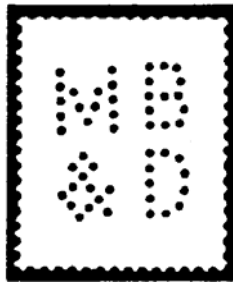
The Hazel Grove factory built a standard range of diesel engines, but during the Great War, they developed a special type of oil engine for use in the 'Tank', first used in 1916.



1920-1936

A second die was used by the company, taking them through the 'depression' and into the years leading up to the WWII. Typical of their production at this time was the engine shown alongside, a far cry from the first Mirrlees diesel of 1897.

The company's third and final perfin (as far as we know) was a multiheaded die, in use until just after the Second World War.



1936-1948

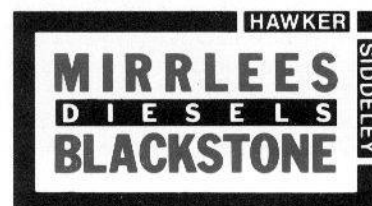
Evidence for the die being multiheaded can be seen in this joined pair showing the "B" completely missing. The pair probably dates to around 1939.



Although the story ends here with regard to the use of perfins, there is one final twist!

After cessation of hostilities in 1945, "Mirrlees, Bickerton & Day", became a member of the "Associated British Oil Engines Group of Companies", which was itself part of the "Brush Group". In 1957 the "Brush Group" (which the "National Gas and Oil Engine Co Ltd had joined in 1950') was acquired by "Hawker Siddeley". Then in 1961, "Hawker Siddeley" amalgamated "*Mirrlees, Bickerton & Day*" with the "*National Gas, and Oil Engine Company*" to form "*Mirrlees National Ltd*". And so the wheel had turned full circle with Henry Bickerton's two companies becoming one.

In 1969, "Mirrlees National Ltd" and "Blackstone & Co Ltd", were merged to become "*Mirrlees Blackstone Ltd*".



The company still trades under this name today