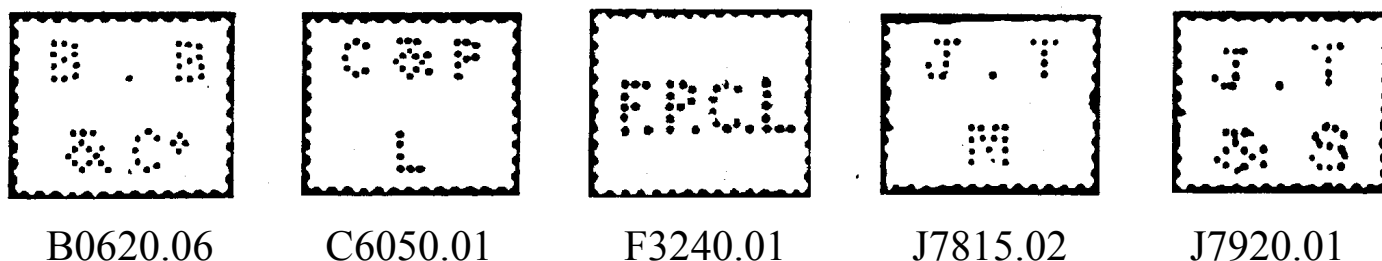


PHANTOM BANTAMS

Maurice Harp

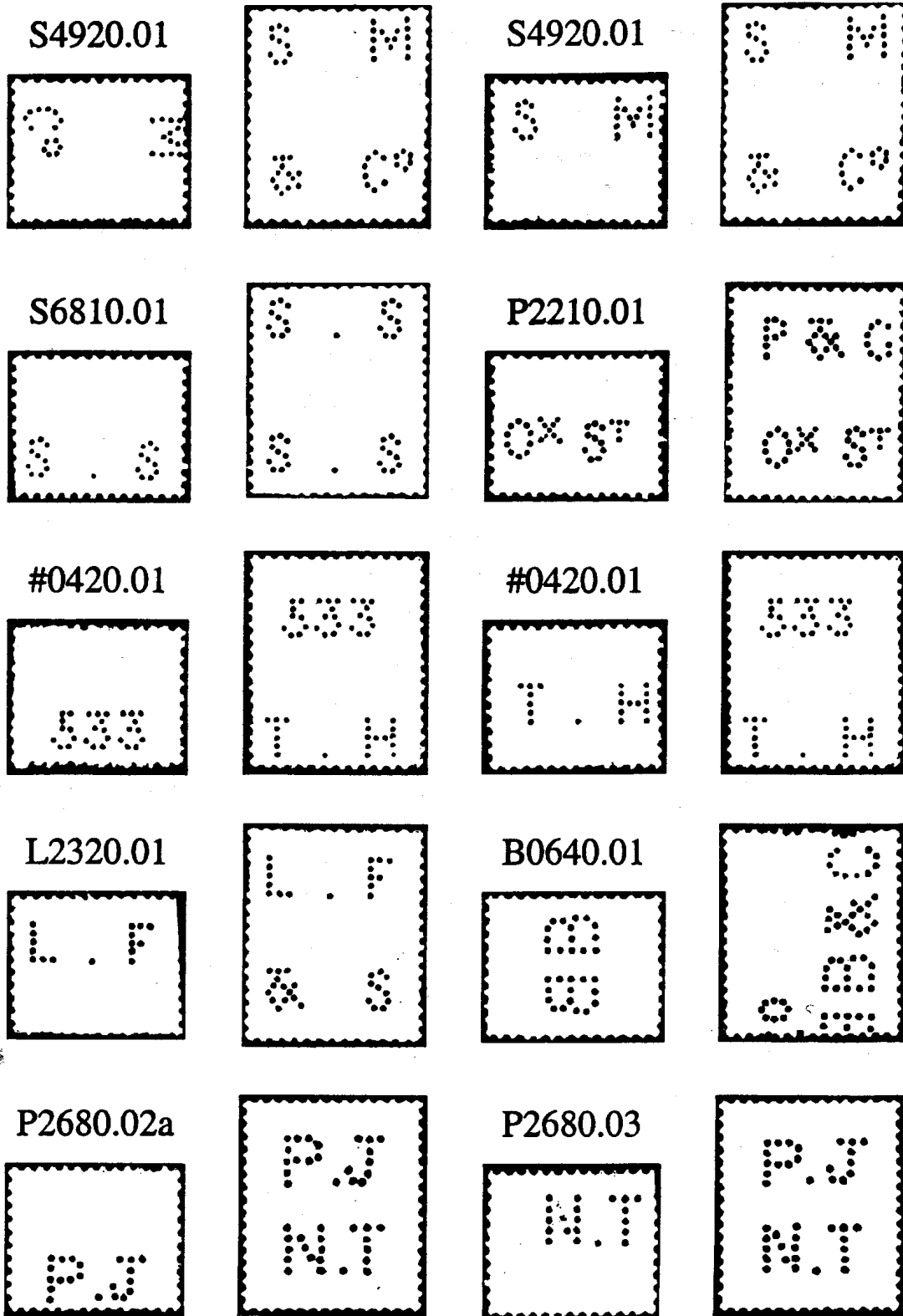
When the ½d value was introduced by the Victorians in 1870 it received a mixed reception. Although welcomed by the public as it heralded the introduction of the postcard and ever-cheaper communication, stamp collectors for one were not enamoured with this small format stamp that didn't conform to what they had been used to. It also can't have pleased the hundreds of owners of perfin machines who found that they had problems perforating these small format stamps. Some perfin users were lucky in that their design conveniently fitted onto the bantam. Owners of larger perfin dies had two options – buy a new machine just for the bantams or try and use the existing machine to produce a partial strike. A few of the larger users brought special machines to handle bantams and Sloper appears to have adopted a smaller alphabet for preparing these dies. Only a few of these small alphabet dies have been recorded – five of these specially produced dies that are only found on bantams are illustrated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1



For the unsuspecting perfin collector the bantams appear to have many unique dies but unfortunately most of them end up as being partials. The illustrations in figure 2 shows examples from my collection but I am sure there are many more still to be discovered. As can be seen it seems that the boys carrying out the work didn't worry too much whether they used the top or the bottom part of the die – or even the right or the left side of the die. One of these partials has even crept into our catalogue - T4420.03 T.T which is actually a partial T4495.03 (T.T/&C^o)– however Roy assures me that it will be removed at the earliest opportunity. The clue to identifying these dies as partials is when the die is only recorded on a bantam.

Figure 2



So most of the time the use of an oversized die on a bantam results in a partial but there is one recorded instance of the user carefully applying both the top and bottom parts of the die onto the stamp. Die S5840.01 - S.P/&C^o is illustrated in figure 2 and as can be seen part of a second "&C^o" can be seen at the base of the stamp. It would be interesting to know if these perfins were always produced so carefully or whether an "S.P" die exists.

However not all dies that have only been found on bantams should be dismissed as partials. Figure 3 shows three dies that have only been recorded on bantams but appear not to be partials. When I first found die B2940.04 - B&G - I thought it must be a partial of J4090.01 - J&I/B&G especially as this die had not been recorded before. But the spacing of B&G is distinctly different so until proved otherwise this stands as a new die. Similarly M&S - M4990.12 and T&Co. - T1016.01 appear to be genuine dies. If any member can report other bantam partials I would be interested to hear from them.

Figure 2 (contd.)

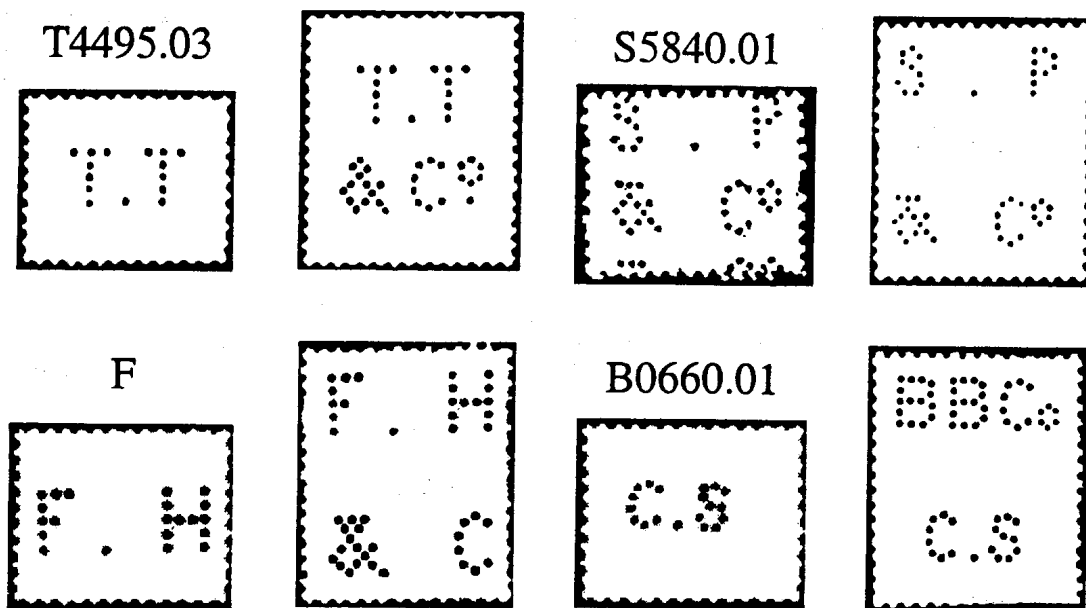


Figure 3

