

"Run of the mill" covers often tell interesting stories

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You may remember in an earlier article I mentioned that I was introduced to perfins collecting via other philatelic interests. One particular interest was collecting the Machin series of definitives from Great Britain.

In use since 1967, the Machin definitives have had quite a number of printers, printing methods, papers, gums, perforations, colors and printing styles, giving the specialist thousands of collectible varieties. The spin-off into perfins was natural, as there are still quite a few firms and organizations using perfins in this, the twilight period of perfin use in Great Britain.

The cover I show with this article is a perfin cover with a twist, worth more than the "run of

this pattern. The die that punched this perfin was made by Sloper and was part of a multi-die machine containing 12 dies in one row.

Nothing special so far.

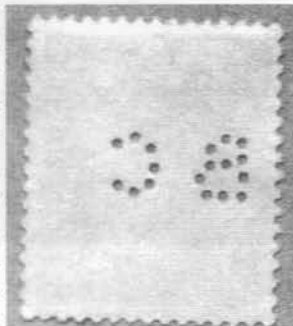
Even though there is no return address or business corner card, the user is identified. The identification comes from the 2d stamp. Although heavily overinked, overprinted on this stamp is the user's name of Bexley Corporation.

Stamps overprinted in this manner typically paid

With the decimal currency there are 100 pennies to the pound. The changeover couldn't occur overnight and there was a "phase in" period, so to speak.

Our cover, postmarked in Catford on 19 July 1971, is an example of a cover from an organization trying to use up their obsolete stamp stock on hand prior to its devaluation. A further incentive for the organization came when the need to pay stamp duty was abolished on 31 January 1971. This explains how an "overprinted" stamp, intended to be used to pay stamp duty, wound up on a letter.

The letter rates had changed with the new currency. The rate we are concerned with is the second class inland letter rate that became 2½ p on 15 February. The two stamps on the letter add up to 6d that were the equivalent of 2½ p (from 240d to the pound to 100p to



the mill" perfin covers during the period. At a glance, it is a rather mundane perfin cover, with a common perfin, no corner card or return address indicating the user, and no special markings.

Let's examine the cover closer to see what makes it interesting.

The perfin BC, punched into the 4d stamp, is pattern B1110.03M in the Edwards/Lucas *Catalogue of Great Britain Perfins*. There are 25 users of

the stamp duty on receipts (2d for every receipt over 2 pounds). And, as with perfins, the overprint was a security device to help deter the theft of stamps by employees.

The question is why would Bexley Corporation use this stamp on the letter in question? The answer lies not with the stamp and not with the rate, but rather with the currency at the time.

On 15 February 1971, Great Britain moved to a decimal currency. Prior to that date, a pound contained 240 pence.

the pound).

Nothing special about the stamps, the 2d has the value set close to the left border and has 2 phosphor side bands, the 4d has a center phosphor band.

To summarize, our cover contains not one, but two security devices. One a perfin, the second a security overprint that just happens to identify the user. An interesting usage of soon to be obsolete stamps paying revised postal rates. This rather dull, plain perfin cover has many things going for it that help increase its value to the collector.