

Cancel may qualify British perfin as first PREPER

Joseph C. Coulbourne, #2574

This perfin from Great Britain has quite a few stories to tell. It is on a poorly centered example of Scott #32 (Stanley Gibbons #52) from plate number 3 (the plate number is just above the bottom "corner letters" in the stamp design) with corner letters AF/FA. The stamp was issued on 1 October 1870, and saw quite a few years of service prior to its replacement.

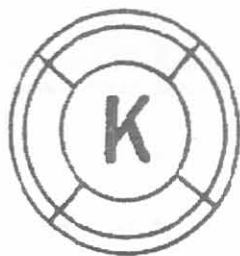
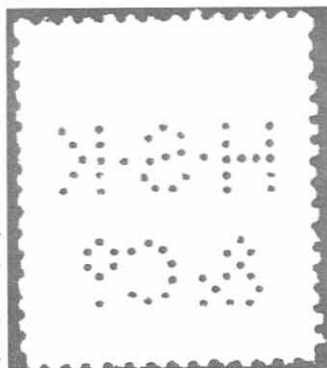
The perfin is H.S.K.&Co. with a catalog number of H6670.01 in the Edwards/Lucas *A Catalogue of Great Britain Perfins*. The 7th edition of the Tomkins *Catalogue of Identified G.B. Perfins* tells us that the user was H. S. King & Co. (formerly Smith Elder & Co.) and that it is known punched (only) in Queen Victoria "pre 1d lilac" stamps.

Other than being punched into an early British stamp with a bit of a catalog value, this perfin doesn't seem to be of much importance.

However, the cancel "makes" the stamp and adds quite a bit to the story. The full cancel was a special cancellation issued by the British Post Office to a private firm. The Royal Mail gave its permission for Smith, Elder and Co. to use "special marks" on its precancelled wrappers in 1865. After application of the stamps and "precancels" at the local firm, the mail was taken directly to the station. Smith, Elder and Co. were taken over by the banking firm of Henry S. King & Co. in 1868. Other writers have pointed out that the firm of Henry S. King & Co. printed the official Stock Exchange Lists and that this accounts for the issue to them of the special mark (cancel) in 1875.

So let me sum it up.

The stamp is precancelled with one of a very few special cancellations issued by the Royal Mail and positively identifies the user as Henry S. King & Co. The stamp is perfined with the initials of Henry S. King & Co. I would offer that this stamp would qualify as a good candidate for the earliest PREPER (precancelled perfin).



Reference:

British Postmarks, A Short History and Guide, R. C. Alcock and F. C. Holland, Second Edition, Published by R. C. Alcock, Limited, 11 Regent Street, Cheltenham, England, pages 160-164

Have you ever seen an