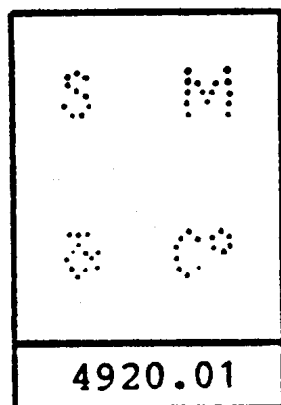
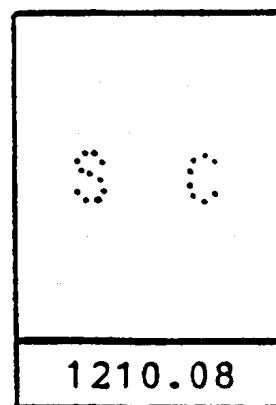


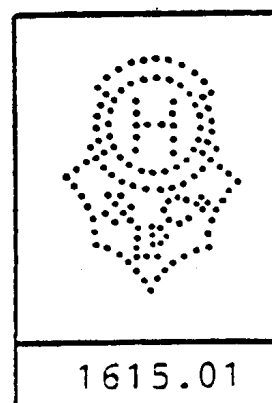
This year saw the staging of the Summer Olympics, where various sporting activities were contested to establish who was 'the best'. So, with the fireworks finale in Barcelona (courtesy of the BBC) still ringing in my ears, I put pen to paper and came up with ten events for my own 'GB Perfin Olympics'.

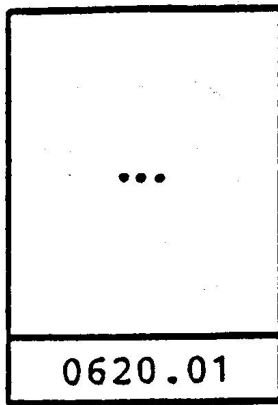
Probably the title of FIRST PERFIN would be regarded by most as the ultimate accolade. Favourite for this must be John Nelson's copy of SC (S1210.08) on a 1d red (pl 73) with the underprint 'Copestake, Moore, Crampton & Co., London'. As early as October 1867, Copestake & Co. sought permission from the Post Office to perforate stamps with the initials of Samson Copestake their senior partner.



However, it was to be another six months before permission would be given by the PMG to Joseph Sloper to perforate postage stamps as a means of protection in a letter dated 13 March 1868. Perfin pieces dated as early as 1869 are very difficult to come by, but recently Brian Smith reported the EARLIEST DATE known of November 186-8 on a 6d Lilac with Samuel Montagu & Co's perfin SM/&C^o (S4920.01).

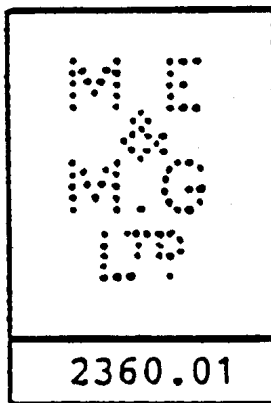
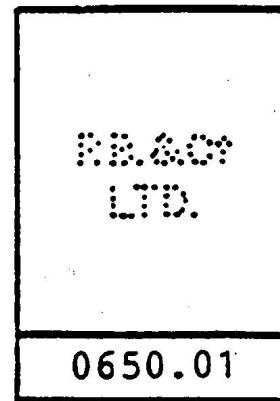
The next category that springs to mind is the perfin with the MOST HOLES. The elaborate perfin H/&C^o/L^d in a fancy frame (H1615.01), recently identified with Humber & Co. Ltd., Bicycle and Tricycle manufacturers, will take some beating at 133 holes. A complete strike of this die will remove a full 5% of the stamp!





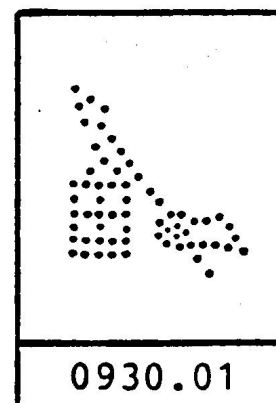
At the opposite end of the spectrum would be the perfin with the LEAST HOLE count or 'minimus'. Two perfins, (Rothmans Design 0620.01 & Feltoe's Design 0630.01) each with three holes, vie for the award, but I suspect that on pure compactness the Rothmans design would win by a short head.

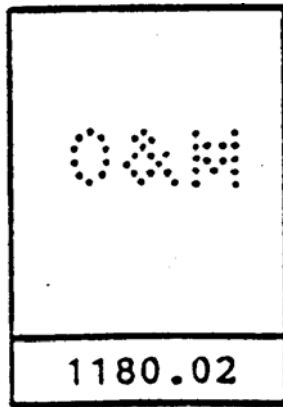
Perhaps the award for THE FINEST or most delicate perfin would go to P.B.&C^o./LTD. (P0650.01), used by Price Brothers & Co. Ltd., at Wellington in Somerset between 1895 and 1915 (approximate dates only!). A full strike of this die, central on the stamp, is a joy to behold.



The majority of GB perfins consist of letters arranged in horizontal lines, but surely an award for the MOST LINES has to be made to ME/&M.G/L^{td}. (M2360.01) which extends to four full lines and covers virtually the whole of the stamp.

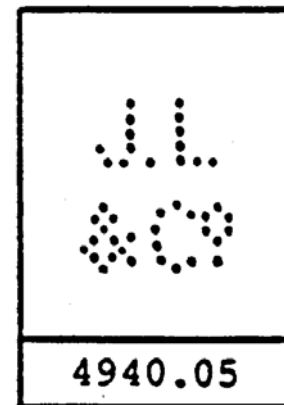
Only too rarely do we see the use of an illustration to 'tell all', so for my money the title of MOST PICTURESQUE would go to Design 0930.01, the trade mark of Salisbury & Son Ltd., Lamp Manufacturers, London.



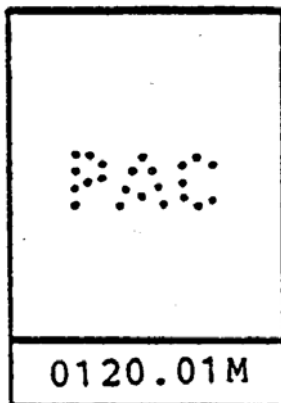


The most difficult title to fill at present (at least with any accuracy) is that of LONGEST LIVED perfin, as very little research has been carried out into the life spans of dies. All I can do for now is offer up O&M (01180.02) as a contender, known to have been used by Osborn & Mercer from c1895 through to the early 1960s

Inevitably, the use of perfins is concentrated mainly in towns and cities, the usual centres of commercial activity, but the MOST REMOTE use of a GB perfin I can find is that of an as yet unpublished J.L./&Co. (J4940.05) postally used at Lerwick in the Shetlands on 2nd Oct 1895.



My 10th and final category is awarded to the MOST UBIQUITOUS. Three perfins have been successful enough to be rated as contenders. You guessed them ! GLC, IL/EA and the inevitable PAC. Although many different perfins have been used by the 'Pru' over the years, in my experience the one most commonly encountered is PAC (P0120.01), beating both GLC and IL/EA by a whisker



However, as with the Olympic sports, records only stand until they are broken so if you can improve on any of the above categories (or introduce new ones), please let me know and I will keep the list up to date. The precedent has been set for a re-appraisal in four years time!