

I can understand the gloom and despondency spreading throughout the Society as members read this title, but notice that it does have a question mark after it! As Catalogue Editor, it is, however, my job to draw members' attention to the difficulties building up in the existing system.

Like Topsy the existing system "just grew". Its history is given in my Article "Perfin Catalogue Numbering Systems" in issue 214 of this Bulletin (December 1984). It is based on the numbering system used in the original "Simplified Catalogue of Perfins of GB" which is now long out of print. Some modifications have been made over the years but the basic system remains. Each different known combination of letters was given a number and where the same combinations of letters had different numbers of holes, or a different height, they were separated by the use of numbers after the decimal point. Similar combinations, not different in this way, but by letter shape or spacing, were suffixed with letters in lower case. New discoveries were inserted between existing numbers using upper case letters following the number.

This system has stood the test of time, but is now suffering from the strain of newly discovered designs. For instance, we have runs like B19, B19A, B19AA and B19B and then find we need to place a new design between B19 and B19A. What should we number it? One solution would be number it B19C and to ignore the alphabetical sequence and another would be to re-number the whole series, leaving plenty of space for new discoveries which are still being made.

The difficulty with renumbering is that it could make catalogues, books and information sheets obsolete overnight, not to mention the confusion of collectors using two different systems to correspond and also to write up their collections. What is required is a new system which is instantly identified as being different from the old, but one so arranged as to be easily converted back to the old system so that existing catalogues and collections remain valid. This is a tall order, but it can be done.

My suggestion is that we leave the part of the number after the point as it is and multiply the basic number by ten. Thus A193.1a becomes A1930.1a. The space now existing between the

numbers can be used to insert new discoveries so A193A becomes A1935 and if a new discovery is found between A193 and A193A in the old system it can be inserted correctly as A1932 in the new system. There is a difficulty in separating the old and new systems in that the number A190 could belong to either system. This is resolved by making all new system numbers four digits long by placing zeros in front of them. Thus A19 becomes A0190 in the new system and we know that A190 is a three figure old system number (its new number would be A 1900).

This all seems most complicated when written out, but a few examples should demonstrate just how simple it is to convert from one system to the other enabling collectors to use either or both.

Old Number	Perfin	New Number
160.6	C & C ^o /L ^d	1600.6
160A	C & C ^o ./L ^d	1605
160B	C & C ^o ./L ^d .	1607
161	C & C ^o ./L ^k .	1610
162. 1	C & C ^o /L ^{td}	1620.1
162.2	C & C ^o /L ^{td}	1620.2
162B	C & C ^o ./L ^{td} ..	1627
162D	C & C ^o /M	1629
163	C .C../N	1630

(data from Tilles page C.29)

The new discovery C & C^o./L^d. would be given the new series number 1606 avoiding the old system number 160AA. The perfin C & C^o/L^d. would be 1602 in the new system but in the old system how could it be placed between 160 and 160A? In a book or catalogue the number P41.1 must be an "old" number identified with the Petroleum Board because it does not have four digits. Its new number would be P0410.1 which has four digits and is easily identified with your catalogue or collection using the old system by deleting the two zeros.

This article is not an announcement of the new system, nor even a suggestion that we use it. Rather it is intended to start a discussion of what must be a controversial and contentious subject. Let me know your views, or alternative methods. If you wish the existing system to be retained, also let me know how you would wish to have new discoveries placed in the numbering series where no place exists for them.