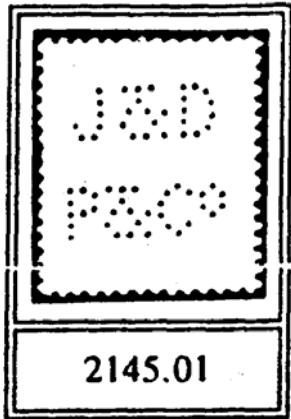


HISTORY OF FIRMS USING PERFIN

J. & D. PATON & Co. Ltd.

By Ian C. Burns.

The following article is the result of a request from Roy Gault to try to identify the perfin J2145.01 – J&D/P&C^o. Roy's information to me was that 4 examples had been seen, all with a Tillicoultry postmark between 1901 and 1907. As Tillicoultry is only about 15 miles from me I was the nearest member.



Tillicoultry is one of several towns along what is known locally as "The Hillfoots" - towns which lie at the foot of the Ochil Hills.

They are Menstrie, Alva, Tillicoultry and Dollar. Because of the streams coming from the hills, the towns grew up around them.

They supplied waterpower for the many woollen mills in the area. One of these being:--

J. & D. Paton a Co. Ltd. - James & David Paton & Co. Ltd.

They came to Tillicoultry from Alloa in 1824 and expanded during the 19th Century so that, by 1882, the works contained 17 sets of carding and spinning machinery and over 250 power and hand looms. In 1851 they were awarded the gold medal at the first Great Exhibition in London for their products.

In 1859 a report in the 'Stirling Journal and Advertiser' stated that they had "...commenced building a large fine mill, close to their other factory, and also a series of large weaving shops*. In the 1860's J. & D. Paton's mill was said to be the largest in Scotland and was the mainstay of the working population of Tillicoultry.

The original works were erected in 1825 and were powered by water. Later it was recorded, in 1880, that both steam and water power were used to drive the machinery, water provided approximately 25% of the requirements. A newspaper - report of 1868 indicated that the steam engine was in operation at the time with a large water wheel for supplementary power.

Paton's were involved in the manufacture of shawls, tartans and tweeds, having diversified in the 1850's after a period of recession in the trade. Their products were known worldwide and were worn by royalty on several occasions. Throughout their history Paton's showed enterprise in experimenting and developing new areas of manufacture and this was suggested as the reason for their continuing success.

A newspaper report of 6th Nov. 1868 gives details of a "Destructive Fire at Messrs Paton's Woollen Manufactory". Apparently the fire originated in the attic floor of what was known as the Old Mill and which ran in an east-west direction forming the north side of the long square building lying nearest the village. The fire was prevented from spreading to the adjacent buildings by the thick gable walls. As a result several hundreds were thrown out of employment.

The company ceased trading in 1980, still being run by Mr. Paton (Sen), a great, great grandson of the original founders. One of the directors was one Graham Paton, son of the above Mr. Paton (Sen). When J.& D. Paton & Co. Ltd. went into voluntary liquidation he started Paton & Sons (Tillicoultry) Ltd. in June 1981 to carry on the same business. By December of that year a further injection of capital was required. This, however, did not work out and the company went into the hands of the receivers on 6th Oct. 1982. A report in the "Alloa and Hillfoot Advertiser" of Wed.17th Nov.1982 is headed "Fraser Lifeline for Tilly Mill?" - "Sir High Fraser is ready to throw a lifeline to a company with just 27 workers which is in the hands of the receiver". Under his plan the company, Paton's Scottish Knitwear Limited of Tillicoultry, Clackmannanshire, would not only be saved but the workforce trebled. Sir Hugh Fraser's company making the takeover was Glen Gordan Knitwear. This took place, officially on 1st Jan.1983 but unofficially it started in early December 1982. This lasted until approximately 1987 when the mill finally closed.

The building remained empty for some years but has now been converted into flats, leaving the facade of the building as it had been originally. This conversion occurred during the early 1990's. Thus ends a long association between the company and Tillicoultry. Unfortunately we still have no proving cover for J. & D. Paton & Co. Ltd.