

STORING, MOUNTING AND DISPLAYING YOUR PERFINS

Rosemary Smith.

It seems an appropriate time to resurrect this hot potato as it will be the focus of the May meeting in London. Over the last few years I have had comments from members about the best way of keeping perfins. The answer will be different for each person depending on his collection, time available for the hobby, use to which you intend to put your perfins, your artistic ability, size of pocket etc. I will kick off by explaining what I do.

In the late 1970's I bought myself a Tilles Catalogue. I divided it into 8, roughly, equal parts; A-B, C-D, E-G, H-J etc and had the 8 parts comb bound. I did not have large quantities of perfins so I hinged those I had over the illustrations on the right hand page. The obvious drawback of not being able to see the illustration anymore without lifting up the stamp did not particularly worry me as at that time I collected only one stamp of each die.

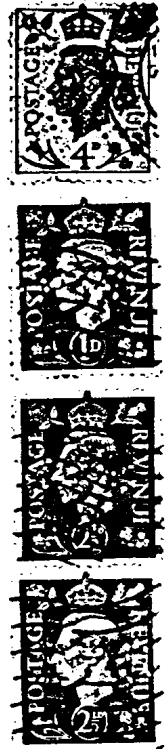
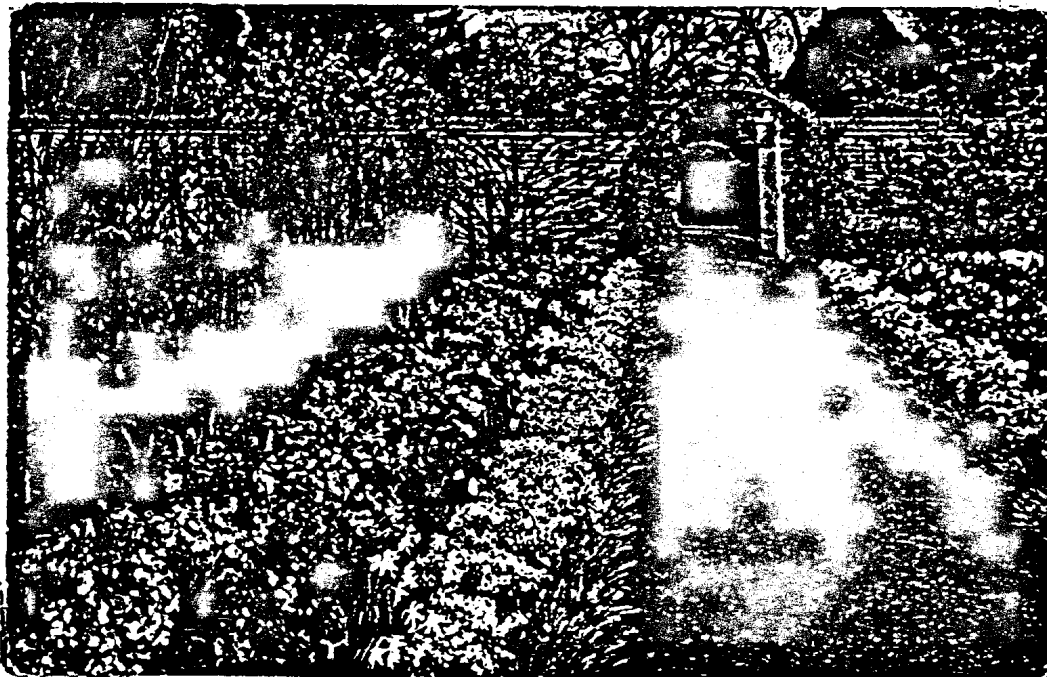
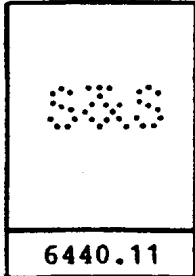
Because of my 'philatelic training' with Sheffield P.S. and the Yorkshire P.H.Soc. I was more of a Postal Historian than a Stamp Collector. It was in the late 1970's that I began my collection of identified perfin covers. This posed another problem - how to store my covers. I decided that I would mount them on album pages using the same techniques as one would for a club display. A typical album page is shown here, reduced in size. In the early days I would trace the perfin die from Tilles to illustrate my album page but now I photocopy from the New Illustrated Catalogue. For each identified cover I now collect all values of that die, displaying them with the cover on the sheet. If I find out anything else about the user I will try to incorporate it with the cover on the album page - either an illustration, newspaper article or writing up from a directory.

I still keep all my other perfins in the Tilles Catalogue, using my new Gault Illustrated Catalogue to check for new dies. As there were quite a number of blank spaces in Tilles, I have added any stamps with the new dies into those blank spaces.


This works for me because of my over-riding interest in covers, not in loose perfins. If I collected only loose perfins I too would be shouting, "Help! How do I mount and display them? "

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Perhaps JOHN CHAPMAN has one answer. This is his method of mounting and storing which he has devised for himself.

"When I started with Perfins I really did not have enough to worry about mounting them - I simply had them in an ordinary stamp album under sets by reign with a note beside them about the perfin. Now that I have several thousand the problem becomes more acute. When I joined the society I phoned around a few members to see what they did and frankly got very little help. I got the impression that a lot simply kept them in stock books or mounted on catalogue pages. So I now do have a system which works reasonably well.

"The first conclusion I came to was that the time needed to compare each perfin with the illustrated catalogue was so great that I simply could not wait - at the rate of ten or so every evening it would take nearly three months to do 100. Grouping by initial letter gave just about the same problem as the result was still unmanageable. So I divided them into groups of letter pairs. This gave a potential of 26x26 groups for letter pairs, another 26 groups for single letters, ten groups for the first digit of numbers and one group for designs, i.e. a total of 713 groups. This divided the collection neatly into quantities that I could handle, especially as the actual number of groups I was dealing with was far below the theoretical maximum.

"The next step was to devise a system of mounting. Personally I detest stock books as a presentation method so that got rejected out of hand. I was also not prepared to pay stamp dealers' prices for album leaves so I decided upon A4 sheets enclosed in plastic envelopes. I managed to get a supply of acid free paper from a conservation company in Oxford and archive quality multi-punched pockets can be obtained from Office World for under 2p each. I then drew a grid of 7x8 to form a backing sheet and kept one line for each different perfin as described by its letters and numerals only. e.g. TB/H. Thus I could mount both varieties and perfins on different stamps. As I mounted each group I entered the details into my computer giving the letter combination (e.g. TB/H), the page identifier (e.g. TB) together with the line number. By now several groups have run over one page but I just keep adding to the line numbers. This effectively enables me to find any perfin within

seconds and, as I compare sheets with the catalogue number, to add the catalogue number.

"On average a page has between four and twenty stamps at a cost of about 1.5p per page. The stamps are well protected, they can be viewed and pages can be inserted or revised with little difficulty. Also covers, stamps on piece etc can be accommodated. So far I have 288 groups for 1623 different stamps averaging about 6 stamps per group. It all sounds a lot more complicated than it actually is and the pages can be held in a standard 4-ring binder.

"When I want to examine a page I can simply remove it from the envelope and place it on a light table (used for photography) which cost me two or three pounds to make - simply a box with a lamp in it, a translucent white shopping bag (to spread the light) and a sheet of glass to sit the sheet on. If I wanted to trace designs a second sheet of glass protects the stamp and it is easy to work with as the stamp is held in position by being mounted on the sheet and the tracing can be held with a small tab of magic tape to the top glass. The light table is also invaluable for sorting as the perfin shows up clearly and you do not need a table lamp and there is no need to work in shadow."

Some years ago IAN BURNS explained his method of illustrating the die in the following manner:-

"As I was interested in photography I found it easy to photograph each die and mount it besides the stamp. I use a sheet of postcard sized photographic bromide paper and I find I can get 15 definitive sized stamps on one sheet. They are held in place by a sheet of glass and the whole thing is exposed under the enlarger for about 15 seconds. The sheet is then developed in the normal way, dried, cut up and mounted in its proper place. There are a few drawbacks to this method - if the stamps are of different density then sometimes the postmark or the watermark shows through quite heavily so one has to be careful in selecting which stamps to put together. Using this method I can place the stamps face up or face down so that the die will always come out the correct way round and not back to front as some publications show them - obviously photocopies done from the back of the stamp. I have used this method for some ten years now with a fair amount of success."