

## PERFIN PRICES and RARITY VALUE

By Dave Hill

Many thanks to the members who responded to my thoughts on perfin rarity and pricing of perfins in Bulletin 289/16-17.

Some figures from Roy Gault reflect my own thoughts on GB and what other members have told me of their collections of foreign perfins. Whether it is a country that only produced a 100 perfins or GB with about 23,000, the percentages are the same: 30 to 40% complete is fairly easy to obtain with modest expense and effort; a great deal of expense and effort and you could achieve 70%. 90% is unlikely to be exceeded. With GB this leaves you with a large wants list of about 3,000 perfins. With say Holland or Germany you would have a more manageable list of 10 or 20 perfin dies left to get.

Of course as you approach completion the more likely you are to be offered what you already have. I have a modest collection yet usually find that I have 90% of perfins in quite a good mixture of all different dies. There are many modern dies I need yet I avoid buying George VI and QEII stamps because the ones I don't need seem to increase.

Another figure: I used to buy modern kiloware from a charity. I could only find about 70 all different dies out of 1,000 stamps at a first sort and having taken them out I could then only make 35 ADD. That is 90% duplication, but with 3% of dies with only a single example.

It is not surprising that 90% completion is the maximum. Both Roy and I have looked at the number of perfin dies known by just one or two examples. About 30% are known by just one copy and 60% of dies are known on 5 stamps or less. Roy adds that (for letter N) the average number of stamps per die is only 5.6 and the average life of a die is 9.6 years. Obviously the dies only known by one stamp drag these percentages down.

This rarity is not linked to age either, many are wartime provisionals. Perhaps only a sheet were perfined and the survival rate was low.

So there are a lot of members with 30 or 40% of all known dies and a few with 70%. I wonder if these figures would be very different if there are a lot of perfins out there either in "dormant" collections (collectors not actively collecting perfins anymore) or in collections where the collector is unwilling or unable to differentiate between similar dies?

On another but allied subject, a foreign member has looked at the 1993 Tomkins where about 30% of users were known and the pages of the New Illustrated, where as each letter comes out about 50% of users are known or suspected. He wonders when, at this rate, 100% of users would be known!

(Actually letter J lets us down, only 30% of users known, no doubt because so many British firms started with John or James ---- &Co)

Certainly this increase in knowledge of users is a reflection on the interest that the New Illustrated Catalogue, and the information in it, has generated. I think this is due to Roy's professional approach and presentation which inspires confidence.

A member points out that Rosemary heads the list for contributions to the New Identities pages. She has shared her method with us at meetings but never published them. It is CHEEK! Rosemary is well known to dealers as a good buyer but will not buy if she thinks a cover is too dear. Rosemary will carefully record the details of the user and perfin (hole count, height, date etc are often enough to differentiate one die from another) and then hand it back to the dealer. Most of us could not do it, as a race the British are too reserved to make good traders.

A lot of food for thought here: what do you think?

What Rosemary thinks As there is a spare half page I'll get my two-penny worth in first.

My first comment is about the dies which Dave says are only known on a few stamps. I feel this is a very sweeping statement. In the States their latest effort at finding out the rarity of foreign perfins has resulted in about 100 members filling in worksheets. In our Society Roy only has a very small number of members who contribute to the New Illustrated Catalogue; plus access to the wonderful collection of Paul Redmond; plus sight of the 'particular letter collection' of a few of our foreign members; plus details sent in of new dies etc over the x number of years since he took over as catalogue editor. My feeling is that this 'only one stamp' translates into 1% of those in collections, whereas the common ones will be in 70% of collections. With 350 members, some sitting on quite extensive collections but doing no-research with them, I think the 'one stamp with die' is optimistic.

Lastly I take exception to the CHEEK! I have a very good relationship with dealers and when a cover has a high price it is usually because of its postal history markings. With such a cover I will discuss with the dealer the postal markings and then ask if I can take the details of the perfin. I have never had a grudging 'yes' yet.