

S.E.R. - S.E.C.D.R.

P.Vagoni

Browsing through a local dealer's stock I came across the two envelopes illustrated with this article. What caught my eye was the embossed company seals on the backflaps (shown in the insets) inscribed 'SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY' on one and 'SOUTH EASTERN & CHATHAM/AND DOVER/RAILWAYS' on the other.

Both envelopes were addressed to '*F.Sabal Esq.*' at '*Hotel Sanner/Bad Kissingen*' and had been posted on consecutive days, but from totally different sources, i.e. LONDON on the 17th July 1899 and COLN on the 18th July 1899.

Further examination of the Queen Victoria stamp revealed it was perforated with the initials 'SE/CD' which are those of the 'SOUTH EASTERN & CHATHAM/AND DOVER RAILWAYS'. However this 'SE/CD' perfin was used on the envelope with the other company's embossed seal on the backflap.

With the RPG Editor's assistance a search was made for an explanation of the seemingly contradictory use of this perfin and the embossed envelopes.

Initially I thought perhaps one company had been formed from the other and these envelopes were merely examples of economic use of existing stationery stock. However a reference on page 139 in Harold Wilson's new TPO book suggested both companies existed, in competition with each other, in 1878. The book quotes the S.E.R. complaint that passengers would travel via the other company's route if they found out that the 'French Mail' could be detained for up to one and a half hours if the 'Ostend Day Mail' was late in arriving at Dover.

The Security Endorsement & Perfin Society of G.B. published an excellent book, *Railway Perfins of Great Britain*, by R. Bowman in 1976 and this proved to be an invaluable source of information.

Pages 64-66 showed the South Eastern Railway produced and used a variety of 'SER' perfins from 1888 until 1899.

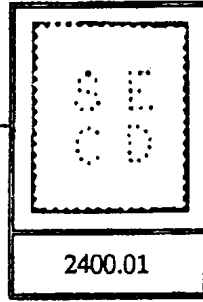
The next pages, 67-70, in Bowman's book dealt with perfins containing 'SE/CR' (not SE/CD) and these were for the use of the Joint Committee of the two companies formed in 1899. First conclusion was that this 'SE/CD' perfin was an item unknown to the Perfin Society. However at the top of page 67 the titles of the two companies forming the Joint Committee were the SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY and the LONDON, CHATHAM & DOVER RAILWAYS, i.e. 'LONDON' not 'SOUTH EASTERN' in the latter.

Turning to page 42 of Bowman's book revealed there were three different perfins produced by this company all containing 'SE/CD'. However, two perfins had additional letters, either 'BA' for Bricklayers Arms, or 'BF' for Blackfriars. The author stated that these perfins must have also been used by the SER as the reported dates of use are all within the period of the 'Working Union' from January 1899 to August 1899 when Royal Assent was received for the Joint Committee.

Only two values are listed in the book, the 1881 halfpenny and the 1887 penny, so this 1887 two and a halfpence value is a new listing. The use of this perfin on the 'SER' envelope confirms Bowman's statement of dual use in 1899.

[Ed:- this article is taken in its entirety from the RAILWAY PHILATELIC GROUP journal Railway Philately Vol 31, No 3, June 1997.

In our last Bulletin, 294 page 16, there was another article taken from the RP.G. journal. It was as a consequence of asking for permission to quote this article that I had a letter from the Editor of Railway Philately, Fred Taylor. He was very happy to agree to my request as "he firmly believes it is best to spread philatelic information to as wide an audience as possible". (I could not agree more!) He therefore sent the article appearing here and a further one from The G.B. Journal which will be in the next Bulletin. It is a pleasure to know that our research is being used by other specialist societies. Ron Bowman would definitely have approved.]



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Note: The company seal, being albino, have been 'computer adjusted' to allow them to be illustrated.