

A BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE

PERFIN

SOCIETY

By

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Introduction

The 40th anniversary of the Society seems an appropriate time to record its early history before it is forgotten.

The memories and recollections of long-standing members have been tapped to supplement written records such as the Society bulletins and, notably, the Jennings book.

It would be foolish to claim that there are no errors or omissions but we believe these to be few and minor.

Pre-founding

Although perfins were introduced by Sloper in 1868 it was many years before they were recognised as worthy of study by philatelists.

For a long time most collectors regarded them as damaged stamps and destroyed them.

This attitude lasted until comparatively recently, but has changed markedly in the last twenty years.

The change is due partly to the publication of articles in the philatelic press and the efforts of our members.

Several collectors did study perfins in the 1920 to 1945 period, notably Hugh Vallencey, who published a short monograph in 1933, Dr Rendall and Charles Bein who corresponded with other collectors chiefly in the USA.

Founding

After World War 2 perfin enthusiasts corresponded and when, in 1956, Charles Jennings had a two part article about perfins published in *Stamp Collecting*, more people wrote for further information. They were directed to Ron Bowman who had already been selected as the contact person for their small group.

In 1957 the number of correspondents had risen to twenty and in July 1957 they founded the Society we know today.

These founder members were

Bowman R.J.
Bartleson A.S.
Clarkson H.
Eades E.
Hoggett R.A.
Lucas Mrs B.
Mugleton D.
Newman Mrs J.
Tomkins B.C.
West W.

Carr C.J.T.
Blyth J.G.
Davidson D.
Fosbery J.
Jennings C.
Millett P.J.
Nelson J.
Smith F.H.B.
Welch M.O.
Young K.Rymer

The original title was "*G B Perfin Study Group*". Evidently modesty prevented the use of the more prestigious "Society".

At the end of 1963 it became "*Security Endorsement & Perfin Society of G B*". This cumbersome title was adopted almost entirely at the insistence of the then President, Charles Jennings, who maintained correctly that over- and under- prints were the predecessors of perfins and should therefore be included in the title.

At the London meeting in November 1983 it was decided that the title "*The Perfin Society*" be adopted.

The aims of the Society are the study of all aspects of perfins. These comprise the identification of users, the recording of dies, periods of use, number of dies in the perforating heads etc. All this information to be published in the form of lists, catalogues, monographs as appropriate.

Early Days

Originally the dissemination of information was by correspondence from member to member. It was soon realised that this was rather slow and inefficient. A duplicated news-sheet was started in 1957 and was sent to all members. This was sent out every month, or two months, depending on the workload of the Secretary/Editor.

Meetings

Membership of the Society has always been widespread, initially in the U K and U S A and subsequently worldwide. Consequently communication between members is for the most part by the written or spoken word.

Members soon realised that meetings were very desirable for those who could manage to attend. The first meeting was proposed in June 1961 and took place at the *Crown & Sugarloaf Inn* on 18th November that year. Twelve members attended. Two more meetings were arranged the following year and then seem to have lapsed for some nine years.

Regular annual meetings in November started again at
B P A, 466 Strand:- 1971 and 1972
National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place:- 1973 to 1981
(in rooms rented by the B P F)
B P F, 314 Vauxhall Bridge Road:- 1982 to 1983
Baden Powell House, Queens Gate:- 1984 to date

These meetings were all in London and attendance is inevitably limited to those willing and able to travel there. On a few occasions members from overseas have attended when their holiday or business stay in the U K coincided with a meeting.

A few provincial meetings have been held in Sheffield, Cambridge, Birmingham and Morley. The last is held at a Stamp Fair, the last Saturday of each month, and perfin collectors are usually to be found there. The other venues have been in members' homes.

Officials

The rather casual way in which the Society was started has meant that no committee as such has ever been set up. The running of the Society has always been in the hands of the officials, who are recruited as and when a replacement is necessary. This rather unprofessional procedure has resulted for the most part in the Society being run by a small band of keen and energetic workers who are responsible for the flourishing state in which it finds itself today.

The day-to-day running of the Society is left in the hands of the appropriate official. Any more serious matters are discussed with the other officials before a decision is taken. The London meetings are sounded out for opinions on such matters - this is as near to an Annual General Meeting as is considered practical. Any fundamental matter which is considered to require the opinion of all members would be the subject of a postal vote by all members. Fortunately this has not yet proved necessary.

President

This office is virtually a sinecure but it was felt that the Society should have a titular head ideally chosen for his/her contribution to the Society and knowledge of perfins. To date we have had four:-

<i>Charles Jennings</i>	<i>1957 - 1973</i>
<i>K Rymer Young</i>	<i>1973 - 1979</i>
<i>John Nelson</i>	<i>1979 - 1993</i>
<i>Michael Rucklidge</i>	<i>1993-</i>

Secretary

The founding secretary was ***Ron Bowman*** who combined this post with those of treasurer and bulletin editor until 1970. By then these tasks were too much for one person. (Bulletin editor entailed amassing material, typing stencils, running off some 170 copies, stuffing into envelopes, stamping and mailing every month). ***Michael Rucklidge*** took over in 1970 until 1993 when ***Dave Hill*** took over.

Treasurer

Ron Bowman was the first treasurer until 1968 when ***John Nelson*** took over for two years. Then we had

<i>Richard Husband</i>	1970 - 1977
<i>Michael Rucklidge</i>	1977 - 1993
<i>Dave Hill</i>	1993

It will be seen that the two posts, secretary and treasurer, have been combined for the last 20 years. This has worked quite well since some of the labour is common to both posts e.g. keeping the membership list up-to-date.

Bulletin Editor

This is possibly the most important post since the Bulletin is the cement which holds the Society together. With some help from *Chris Carr* and *Vic Terry*, *Ron Bowman* produced the Newsletter, later renamed Bulletin, from the start until his untimely death in 1982. He was succeeded by

<i>Tony Edwards</i>	1982- 1987
<i>Frank Tully</i>	1987 - 1988
<i>Rosemary Smith</i>	1988 -

Catalogue Editor

It soon became obvious that to produce worthwhile catalogues it is essential to have an individual to gather and collate all the available data. This is a task demanding many, many hours of careful work and we have been very fortunate in the occupiers of this post.

<i>Basil Tomkins</i>	1964 - 1984
<i>Tony Edwards</i>	1985 - 1988
<i>Roy Gault</i>	1989 -

The late Basil Tomkins is remembered by giving his name to the Identified Perfins Catalogue - the "**Tomkins**".

Publications Officer

For many years the publications produced by the Society were prepared by *Ron Bowman* from stencils and sent out with the bulletins. More recently they have been printed either in-house or by outside printers.

Eventually it became desirable to have a single person to order, store and despatch material.

<i>Ron Higgs</i>	85 - 87	<i>Tony Edwards</i>	87 - 98
<i>Geoff 'Longbottom</i>	89 - 91	<i>John Donner</i>	91

Auctioneer

The Society's postal auction started in a small way in 1964 and has grown, thanks to many hours of devoted work by the auctioneer, to some six a year sent out with the bulletins.

<i>Chris Carr</i>	64 - 74	<i>Ted Francombe</i>	75 - 76
<i>Peter Day</i>	79 - 86	<i>Harry Skinner</i>	87 -

Packet Superintendent

The Sales Packet has had a chequered career with eight members running it over the years. It has provided a useful way of disposing of members' perf ns but has never been profitable largely because of losses in the mail.

<i>W West</i>	57 - 59	<i>MRucklidge</i>	59 - 64
<i>W West</i>	65	<i>John Nelson</i>	71 -
<i>Brian Birch</i>	71 - 82	<i>John Luft</i>	83 - 86
<i>David Scott</i>	86 - 89	<i>Dave Hill</i>	90 -

Librarian

The Society soon began to accumulate written material on perfins such as catalogues, articles from the press, bulletins from other societies etc. These formed the nucleus of the library from which items could be loaned to members by mail. A librarian to keep this material and arrange the loans was obviously essential.

<i>? Holden</i>	61 – 63	<i>Frank Summers</i>	64 - 70
<i>Brian Birch</i>	71 - 84	<i>Maurice Hankin</i>	85 - 86
<i>G Longbottom</i>	87 - 91	<i>Maurice Harp</i>	90 - 94
<i>John Donner</i>	94		

Bulletin

The Bulletin has always been the major means of dissemination of information among members.

In the early days it was produced from stencils typed by Ron Bowman. He prepared the manuscript, ran off copies on the Gestetner, placed in envelopes and posted.

The bulletin appeared every month until 1972, since when it appears every two months. Currently the bulletin is prepared on computer by the editor, printed professionally and despatched by member John Luft, so the workload is more spread.

Publications

One of the main tasks of the Society is the cataloguing of the many perfin designs found on the stamps of the U.K.

The first listing was the **SIMPLIFIED** catalogue. This listed all the then known patterns in numerical order starting at 1 for each letter of the alphabet. Since it was suspected (all too rightly) that more patterns would be found, blanks were left so that these could be allocated the appropriate serial number.

An illustrated catalogue was published by **VAN LINT** in the USA in 1959. This consisted of illustrations only, some 80 to a page. Reference to a particular pattern was numerical e.g. 45.71 is the first pattern on line 7 on page 45. Some 10,000 patterns were shown.

In 1971 **HARVEY TILLES** in the USA proposed a catalogue giving illustrations, details of letters (number of holes, height etc) plus the identities of users where known.

Initially little interest was shown and it was not until 1975 that publication started a letter or two at a time. Some 14,000 patterns were shown.

The compiling was done by **BASIL TOMKINS** of the Perfin Society and **ROBERT McKEE** of the American Perfins Club: publication was done by **HARVEY TILLES** of the Perfins Club. Patterns were allocated with numbers carried over from the Simplified catalogue with .1, .2, .3 etc added where different dies of exactly the same lettering existed. In many cases insufficient blanks had been left so that letters A, B, C, etc had to be added.

By 1985 many additional dies had been discovered so that a new listing was highly desirable. Since the identities (see below) were already catalogued separately it was decided to publish the *EDWARDS* catalogue of illustrations only. This was started in 1986 and eventually had some 15,000 dies. A much improved numbering system was introduced doing away with letters and allowing scope for many new dies while maintaining alphabetical/numerical order.

The increased interest in perfins resulted in an increase in the number of known patterns to some 22,000. While this could be coped with by adding additional pages, as was indeed done for some time, it was agreed that a new edition was desirable. This task was undertaken by *ROY GAULT*. It is currently being issued a letter or two at a time in two versions. The first consists of illustrations only. The second has illustrations plus much information such as the user's name and address, business (where known), period of use, head format etc.

Another task of the Society is the listing of "identities" i.e. the names of the users of perfins. This was undertaken by *BASIL TOMKINS* in 1982 until his death in 1984. *TONY EDWARDS* took this on until 1988 since when *ROY GAULT* has produced it in addition to the Illustrated catalogue.

Several specialised catalogues have been produced over the years, among which are

Railway Perfins **Ron Bowman**

GB Official Perfins **Mary Thornton**

subsequently revised and enlarged by

Tony Edwards & Betty Lucas

Sloper's Wartime Provisionals **Roy Gault**

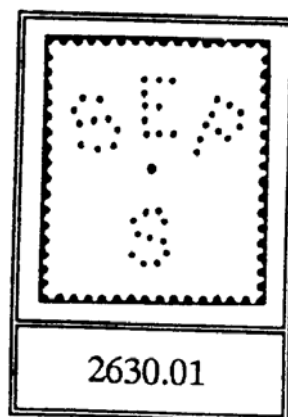
Hospital Dies **I Hamill, K Parkhill, S Steere, R Gault**

The Society Perforators

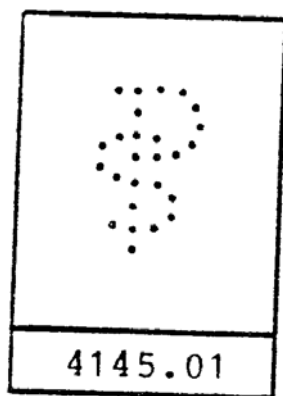
Perfins were intended as a security measure against the theft of postage stamps. They were not intended for publicity: indeed the British Post Office forbade (though ineffectively) the use of full names.

The purist deprecates the use of perfins by individuals of the Society since the security aspect must be negligible.

However the majority of members agree with the use of a perforator and the SEPS model was purchased in 1964 and used to perforate stamps used to mail bulletins. Members could also have their postage stamps perforated for their personal use.



At the London meeting in November 1983 we became "The Perfin Society" and the SEPS perforator became obsolete.



Thanks to the good offices of member Peter Day, his perforator, PS in anagram form, was offered on loan to the Society. This is still in use by the Catalogue Editor.

Membership

Since the modest beginning of 28 members there has been a steady increase to the present 350.

This growth is partly due to introduction by existing members and partly to the appearance of articles on perfins in the philatelic press which usually result in a few new members.

Although the Society's main concern is the study of the perfins of the U.K. we have a considerable number of members from overseas.

In conclusion it may be well to remind members of the debt they owe to our officers and others who run the Society.

Michael Rucklidge

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