

## THE BRIDGEWATER ESTATES PERFIN MACHINE

**Alastair Walter**

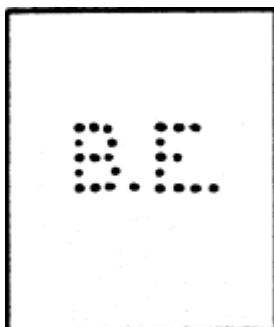
As mentioned in Bulletin 341, I was recently approached by Ian Guthrie, a non-member who now owns the perfin machine formerly used by the Bridgewater Estates Company. The machine is illustrated below and is still in working order.



Ian Guthrie joined Bridgewater Estates Ltd. in 1969, having earlier been employed by their auditors. When Bridgewater Estates bought a franking machine, in around 1965, he purchased the machine. He has recently being using it as a very substantial paperweight! The machine however has no makers name or other marking on it.



A scan of the perforation produced by the 6x1 multi-headed die is illustrated above. Although the scan is not clear, Roy agrees that it seems to be a match for B2320.02a, which will now be called B2320.02aM. The die was in use from about 1939-1946 and has been recorded on ½d 'Q', and 1d, 1½d, 2½d, 3d issue 'R' - one of which has a 1946 postmark of (Wal)kden, (Manches)ter.



B2320.02a

Ian Guthrie recalls the machine in use by Bridgewater Estates; “The office junior would walk over to the post office in Worsley Village and buy sheets of stamps, which he had to tear into strips, then perforate before putting them into the petty cash tin”.

Bridgewater Estates Ltd. has its origins in the Bridgewater Trust, formed in 1803 on the death of the 3rd Duke of Bridgewater to manage his collieries, the Bridgewater Canal and extensive land west of Manchester. The canal and its perfins were discussed in Bulletin 338, p.15-17.

The trust was to last until 20 years after the death of all the then peers of the realm and their eldest sons, and was wound up in 1903. The estates (now excluding the canal) passed to the 3rd Earl of Ellesmere, who died in 1914, and then to the 4th Earl, John Francis Egerton, who in 1921 set up the Bridgewater Collieries and Bridgewater Wharves companies, to protect against death duties. In 1923, they became subsidiaries of Bridgewater Estates Ltd., set up by a consortium of local businessmen to buy the estates for £3 million.

Initially located in the village of Walkden, Lancashire, the Bridgewater Estates offices moved a couple of miles away to Worsley in 1929. Having initially concentrated on the mineral reserves, the company later became more involved in the development of the land for housing, establishing a subsidiary, the Walkden Land Company, in 1958. Bridgewater Estates was sold to Peel Holdings in 1983.

#### Sources:

1. Correspondence with Ian Guthrie (Library number 5205)
2. The Boothstown Website:  
<http://freespace.virgin.net/tony.smith/index.htm>