

Some Slants on Official Perfins – Bulletin 345/18

John Mathews has forwarded a series of articles by W. A. Wiseman in Gibbons Stamp Monthly September - November 2005. “The first perfin, ordered in August was HM/OW which proved unacceptable in use and it was suggested that a design incorporating a Crown might be better. These were ordered in October but proved equally unacceptable. There is nothing in the National Archives on this.” In which case what is his authority?

Alastair Walter has sent a copy of Chapter 14 taken from Wiseman's 'The De La Rue Years 1878-1910 – Volume 2'. Wiseman states that the Office had numerous sub-offices including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. He states that only a single overprinted stamp is known from Southampton used in 1897. On many occasions after 1882 they made requests to have their stamps overprinted in the manner of the Inland Revenue. These requests were rebuffed. In 1895 the Office and the Army both returned to the Treasury and it was suggested that they should try perfins as used by the Board of Trade. Although the two organisations had widely different requirements a trial went ahead in August 1895. The Sloper letter in Bulletin 345 must therefore refer to the production of the first die HM/OW. The Office was not happy with the experiment as they really wanted overprints but it was suggested that a crown should be incorporated to distinguish the perfin from private ones. On the 2nd March 1896 permission was given for overprints and the perfin experiment was over.