

Braham 'Proofs' - the 'Acle' Hoard.

The existence of over one hundred so-called 'Braham Proofs' has been known for decades, but it was only in July 2014 that they re-surfaced in one of Horners stamp & postcard auctions held in Acle. These 'Braham Proofs' were part of an accumulation of Perfin material belonging to the late Geoff Longbottom, which was purchased by Perfin Society members **Ron Mills** and **Peter Maybury**. In all, **119** items were found, *ten* of which, all beginning with the letter "W", are exhibited here accompanied by a smattering of associated material.

I guess the first questions to answer are:

- Who was Frank Braham?
- What is a Braham Proof?

Frank Braham (1859-1911) was the son of Lewis Braham, a Commercial Traveller (Optician), and Caroline Bright. We know from the 1881 Census that Frank Braham was a 'Perforating Press Maker' employing 2 workmen, one of whom was his brother Herbert, later to become a partner. Trade directories of the period also show him as a Perforated Press Maker working in Hoxton Square, London N, but by the mid 1880's he was running the Post Office in Tabernacle Street, London EC, and advertised not just his perforated presses for sale, but also an 'in-house' service providing perforated postage stamps 'on request'.

An unusual relic from this period is this 10 centimes piece of Napoleon III dated 1853, which was probably countermarked in the mid 1880's. At the time, these countermarked French coins circulated freely as British pennies, but also served as an advertisement.

“SEE BRAHAM’S AD^{vt} IN POSTAL GUIDE”



Actual size



Actual size

In December 1905 Frank Braham filed for bankruptcy, and as a result caused the G.P.O. to seriously consider the possibility of officially perforating postage stamps with initials, either at Somerset House or at the contractor's works. Fortunately, the idea was dropped!

After his bankruptcy, it would appear that Frank Braham wasted no time in setting up another stamp perforating company - the Printing & Stamp Perforating Co, 9 Smith Street, Finsbury, London EC - which he was involved in running until his death in 1911.

A small number of Frank Braham's request forms have survived, an example of which is shown below bearing a dummy perforation "D&F/G" on an 'inter-pane gutter' showing 'Jubilee' lines. These so-called 'Jubilee' lines were introduced in 1887 to improve the print quality of the stamps either side of the gutter between the two panes of stamps. 'Pillars' were also added in 1899 to further enhance the print quality. All bar one of the 'Acle' hoard show only Jubilee lines, which probably dates the hoard to the mid to late 1890's.

Date of Order. Date of Delivery.



POST OFFICE, Tabernacle Street, E.C.

STAMP REQUISITION.

	No of Sheets required	No of Sheets required		
		l	s	d
1d. Postage Labels at 10s. per sheet of 240				
1d. " " £1 " " 240				
11d. " " £1 10s " " 240				
2d. " " £1 " " 120				
21d. " " £1 5s. " " 120				
3d. " " £1 10s. " " 120				
4d. " " £1 6s. 8d. " " 80				
5d. " " £1 5s. " " 60				
6d. " " £1 " " 40				
9d. " " 15s. " " 20				
1s. " " £1 " " 20				
2s. 6d. " " 2/6 per single stamp				
5s. " " 5s. " "				
10s. " " 10s. " "				
£1 " " £1 " "				
£5 " " £5 " "				
Charges for Perforating				
1d. Wra	£1 3s. 4d. per parcel of 480			
Amount from other side				
TOTAL		£		
Amount of £..... herewith				

Design Required Signature _____

Address _____

Date _____ 18

Stamps to be recd. by

**ALL STAMPS DELIVERED IN SHEETS
WITHOUT ANY CHARGE FOR DIE**

CHEQUES PAYABLE TO F. BRAHAM, [POSTMASTER] ——— CROSSED & Co,
FOR POST CARDS, BILL STAMPS, &c., SEE OTHER SIDE.

FRANK BRAHAM'S STAMP REQUISITION FORM

An analysis of the hoard material has resulted in this re-constructed 'standard' alphabet used by Frank Braham.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M		
N	N	O	P	P	Q	R	R	S	S	T	U	V	W	W
X	Y	Z	&	o	&o	&o	&o	o	o	o	o	o		

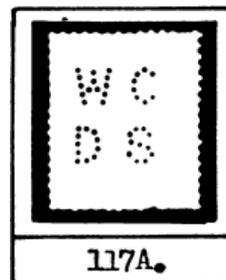
The 'Braham Proof' affixed to the Stamp Requisition Form is thought to be the set of initials required by the customer, some of which bear a manuscript four digit number in ink. The split is 45% with a number and 55% without, so it's fitting to start with a un-numbered example.



W1175.01

This particular pattern has been seen on a postage stamp in the past as it was illustrated in the mid 1970's by Harvey Tilles as W117A.

Unfortunately, there is no record of any stamp or postmark details to give a clue as to where, and possibly by whom, it may have been used.



W1345.04

This next one rings the changes in that it has a m/s number in pen, '2011', thought to have been allocated to a particular customer perhaps as an 'account' number. It also shows unusually large letters.



The "W/&C^o" Perfin die is known to have been used 1895-1922 by *Winstone & Co Ltd*, Wholesale Ironmongers, Cross St, Finsbury Pavement, London EC. The fact that the die continued to be used well after Frank Braham's bankruptcy (and death) points to the possibility that his successor at the Tabernacle Street Post Office, William Lloyd Kenny, may well have inherited Frank Braham's 'in-house' dies and customers.



W3210.01

The use of this "W.G.M" die in *Birmingham* is known from the mid 1880's, although we don't know yet who the user was. The die was in use 1885-1905.

The sideways orientation is unusual for a Frank Braham die. 'Proof' numbered '2010'.



W5420.01

Another un-numbered 'Proof' is "WMP/&C^o", which is known to have been used 1895-1906 by *W M Paterson & Co Ltd*, Upholsterers & Warehousemen, 37 & 39 St Paul St, *London EC*.



Interestingly The die is known used 1906-1908 *without* the "&C^o" portion, so presumably another example of Frank Braham's dies and customers passing to his successor, William Lloyd Kenny, at the Tabernacle St Post Office.

The previous four 'Proofs' all used the inter-pane perforated strip that separated the two panes of Queen Victoria 1d Lilac stamps, whereas this next one would have come from the inter-pane strip from a sheet of Queen Victoria ½d vermilion Jubilees.



W5630.02

The "W.N/B" die also shows mixed height lettering, and is known used 1890-1895, although the user is unknown. Postmark evidence is scant but '*...ham*' suggests the "B" in the Perfin may be for *Birmingham*. 'Proof' numbered '1579'.



W6050.01

This 'Proof' numbered '2020' shows the die used by W Pretty & Son (Ltd), Corset Mfrs, *Ipswich and London EC*. The die was in use 1890-1945, quite a time after Braham's bankruptcy, so perhaps the die was incorporated into a perforating machine and sold to W Pretty.



These next two items are as yet unknown on postage stamps. One is an un-numbered 'Proof', but the other bears '1965'.



Unknown



Unknown



W8140.01

This final Braham 'Proof' is un-numbered, but is thought to have been used by Walter Wilson (Ltd), Grocers, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*.



William Day (1852-1921)

Analysis shows that there are a disproportionate number of ‘Braham’ Perfins known with Ipswich (Suffolk) postmarks, including “**W.DAY**” (W1895.01), known used on postage stamps 1900-1905. Fortuitously, this is also known on a ‘Braham Proof’, N^o.2041, and thought to have been used by *William Day, Grocer & Provisions Dealer, Sub-Postmaster* at 46 St Nicholas St, Ipswich. He later became *Sub-Postmaster* at St Peter’s St, Ipswich (by 27th July 1907, and still there at the time of the 1911 census). William Day died at Ipswich in 1921.

1900-1905



W1895.01

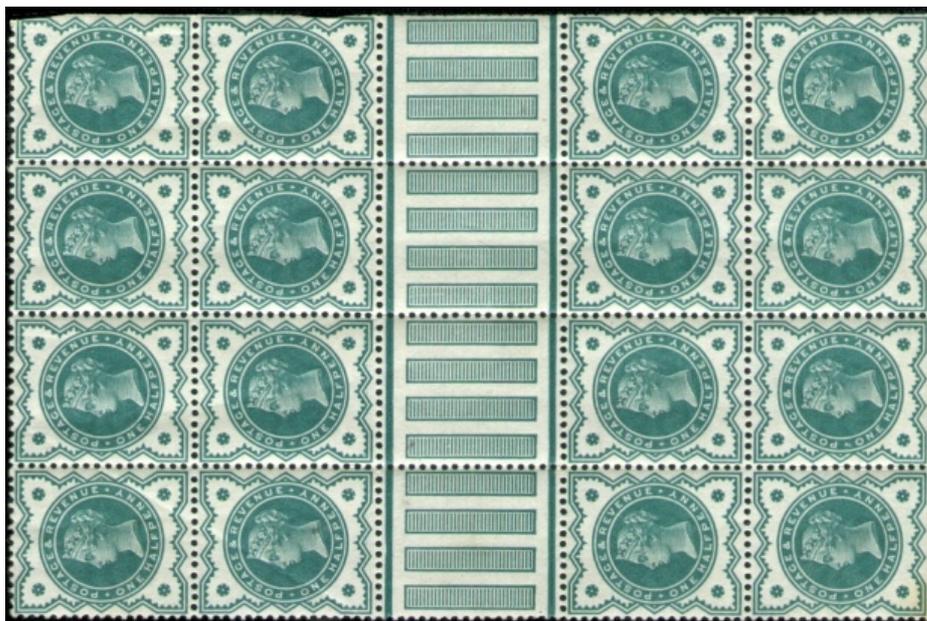


W1895.01



William Day was born at Ipswich in 1852, son of Mary Ann and Robert Day, Green Grocer, Ipswich.

William is recorded as a *Gardener* in the 1871 census, but by 1881 he is a *Grocer & Provision Merchant*, employing an apprentice, at 46 St Nicholas Street, Ipswich. He is still there in 1891 but as a *Grocer & Sub-Postmaster*, and in 1901 as a *Grocer, Sub-Postmaster & Stamp Perforator*. The 1911 census shows him as the *Sub-postmaster* at St Peter’s Street Post Office, Ipswich.



We finish off with a non-Perfin item showing the final stage in ‘Inter-pane’ printing of Jubilee ‘Lines & Pillars’ on this mint block of QV Jubilee ½d (blue-green) issued 17th April 1900.