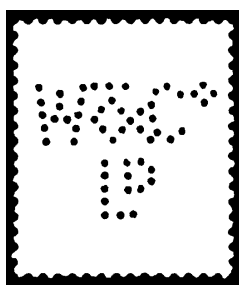


UP THE SWANNY WITHOUT A PADDLE!

Roy Gault

As far as I know, this stamp is the only one known - admittedly, it's got a corner missing and no doubt would be rejected by philatelists as not worth keeping, not just because of the corner damage, but it's full of holes to boot! But to me it's *a treasure* as it has a perfect strike of the Perfin, "W&C^o/L^d" (W1395.02) along with the 'DING' part of a CDS for *Reading*, FE 10/09. As yet the user is unknown, but based on this lone date it has a 'die in use' date range of 1905-1910, although the purists amongst you might say c1909 would be more accurate.

1905-1910



W1395.02

A search under the commercial section for *Reading* in Berkshire trade directories for the years 1899 and 1915 produce just one hit in each.

1899 **John Warrick & Co**, 34 St Mary's Butts, Reading.

1915 **John Warrick & Co Ltd**, 34 St Mary's Butts, Reading.

Grace's Guide tells us that the company was established in Reading in 1877. Certainly by 1883 there was a '*Warrick & Elliott*' in business there as *gun, bicycle & tricycle makers*, 34 St Mary's Butts, Reading, but by 1887 it was just John Warrick on his own at the same address.

There is an interesting story in that *Richard Soper*, a gunsmith in Reading, looked one day over the shoulder of a young boy making a detailed drawing of a gun displayed in Richard's shop window. Using the drawing, the boy later brought in a perfectly convincing replica made of wood! The boy's name was *John Warrick*, but his father (a bargee) couldn't afford to pay £17 for an apprenticeship, so the church administrators paid for John to serve a 7 year apprenticeship as a gunsmith. The surviving indenture is dated 15th January 1859.

The 1861 census lists *John Warrick* as an apprentice living with Richard Soper (1796-1863), who was himself a celebrated gunsmith. In 1862 the gun-making business became known as '*R & W Soper*' when Richard's son, William Soper (1836-1887), joined the company.



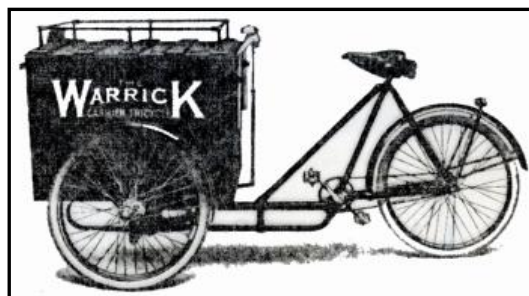
I couldn't resist including the above picture taken in 1868 of *John Warrick* using the *Soper rifle*, firing off 60 rounds in 60 seconds. Of course, this is also the year that *Joseph Soper* started producing Perfins and making Perforating Presses for use on postage stamps!



There is also a record in the Times newspaper (13th July 1871) of the '*Soper rifle used by Private Warwick, 1st Berkshire regiment, distanced all other performances by getting off 68 shots in 2 minutes, making a good score into the bargain*'. The picture above shows the '*Soper*' marquee at the Wimbledon trials in 1871. *John Warrick* is thought to be the gentleman on the back row wearing a 'kepi' (a French military cap as worn by soldiers in the French Foreign Legion), and William Soper is the hirsute guy in the top hat. Worthy of note is that William Soper was an inventor and filed many patents regarding guns and ammunition, as well as inventing various *bicycle parts*.

For more information, see <http://freepages.rootsweb.com>

In 1877, *John Warrick* became an Agent for ‘The Monarch Carrier’, a tradesman’s *box tricycle* reputedly made by W T Pitt in Caversham Rd, Reading, hence the 1877 date in Grace’s Guide. This image of a later model shows the general idea.



By 1882, *John Warrick* had left the employ of William Soper, (declared bankrupt in 1884), and began making guns & bicycles, in partnership with Joseph Elliott (1844-1887), a former apprentice and nephew of Richard Soper. Here’s an early advertisement for the new company placed in the Reading Observer, 8th April 1882. Note the miss-spelling of Warrick, and no mention of the ‘Monarch Carrier’.

WARWICK AND ELLIOTT,
 34, St. MARY'S BUTTS, READING.
GUN, BICYCLE and TRICYCLE MAKERS.
 Repairs "of all makes" promptly executed. The
 Reading Bicycle and Tricycle Agency. Machines of
 various makes kept in stock.
 Every description of Bicycles and Tricycles supplied
 with despatch.

Joseph Elliott had left by 1885, and sadly died in 1887, leaving John to continue the business on his own as a Gun Maker as well as running ‘*The Reading Bicycle & Tricycle Agency*’. The Berkshire Chronicle, 18th April 1885, records the situation, including ‘machines on hire’.

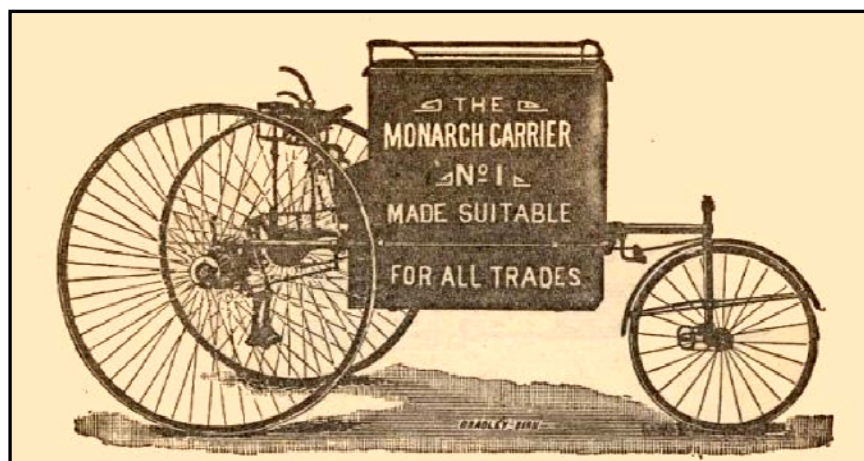
34, ST. MARY'S BUTTS, READING.
JOHN WARRICK, GUN MAKER,
The Reading Bicycle and Tricycle Agency.
 CYCLES of all makes. TANDEM^s and SOCIABLES
 SUPPLIED.
 All the best Safety Bicycles in Stock.
 The new "Quadrant" and "Zephyr" Tricycles
 undoubtedly the best Front Steerers.
 SPECIAL ATTENTION GIVEN TO REPAIRS.
 GREAT VARIETY OF MACHINES ON HIRE.

34, ST. MARY'S BUTTS, READING.
JOHN WARRICK,
 GUN MAKER,
 THE READING BICYCLE & TRICYCLE AGENCY.
SOLE Agent for the "Quadrant," the best and
 most popular Tricycle at the late Stanley Ex-
 hibition, the "Cripper" (with automatic steering)
 and other high-class machines.
 The "Monarch" Carrier for business purposes,
 "Kangaroo," "Rover," "Rapid" and other Safety
 Bicycles. The Coventry Chair, Tandems, Sociables
 and great variety of machines for hire.
Special attention given to Repairs.

The ‘Monarch Carrier’ >>>>

A similar advertisement in the Reading Observer, 6th March 1886, shown above, mentions the ‘Monarch Carrier’ for the first time.

Here we see a *very early* image of the ‘Monarch Carrier’, probably as originally designed by William Thomas Pitt in Birmingham, with the two driving wheels at the back.



By 1888, John Warrick had entered into partnership with William Thomas Pitt forming ‘*W T Pitt & Co*’, cycle manufacturers, Caversham Road, Reading. Here we see an advertisement for labour in the Birmingham Post, 7th December 1888.

CYCLE-TRADE.—Wanted, Men and Youths, used to the lathe and vice; constant employment to steady workmen.—Apply, by letter, to W. T. Pitt and Co., Cycle Works, Caversham Road, Reading. 6/62

However, the Reading Mercury for 20th September 1890 announces that the partnership between the two men had been dissolved, with John Warrick continuing the business *under his own name*.

NOTICE is hereby given that the PARTNERSHIP heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, WILLIAM THOMAS PITT and JOHN WARRICK, carrying on business as CYCLE MANUFACTURERS, at CAVERSHAM ROAD, READING, in the County of Berks, under the style or firm of “W. T. PITT & Co.,” has this day been DISSOLVED by mutual consent.

All debts due and owing to or by the late firm will be received and paid by the said John Warrick alone, who will continue to carry on the business in his own name.

Dated this 17th day of September, 1890.

W. T. PITT.
JOHN WARRICK.

Witness to the signing by the said William Thomas Pitt and John Warrick.

JOHN HARRIS, Solicitor, 53, New Street, Birmingham.

William Thomas Pitt went bankrupt, and in 1891 his Birmingham cycle manufacturing business was auctioned off.

Early *mechanisation* was incorporated into the ‘carriers’, which were essentially ‘delivery vans’. These images show the general concept. In 1914, one hundred guineas (£11,000 today) would have been enough to buy one! Their main competitor was John Weller’s ‘Auto Carriers’ (AC Ltd).



The company also built ‘Tricars’ to carry two passengers and a driver. This beautifully restored example dates to c1914.



By 1925, production of the outdated 3-wheelers had ceased, although the company continued to make bicycles and tricycles. By the mid 1960’s even cycle production had stopped, leaving only electroplating and stove enamelling to keep the business going. The ‘Monarch’ Works in Caversham Road closed in 1971, and the site redeveloped.

A write-up in the ‘*Reading Evening Post*’, 9th July 1971, under the headlines ‘*The end of the Monarchy*’ reports on the planned closure of the ‘Monarch’ Works, but also contains an interesting snippet. A Mr (Alfred Frank) *Wigmore* was ‘*still busy in the Office where he started as a boy 62 years ago, in 1909. His record of service, from a six shillings a week office boy to office manager is unbroken but for three years fighting in the First World War*’. He was in the very office where my stamp was used, and may even have stuck it to the letter!

John Warrick (1845-1925) - died 24th June 1925, leaving £18,270 5s 7d, a handsome £1,000,000 today!

A Codicil!

The '*Soper rifle*' was an important 'failure' in the firearms world. William Soper invested everything he had in its development, but once it wasn't chosen as the rifle of choice for the British Army he was '*up the Swanny without a paddle*', and everything was then downhill for him - he became bankrupt in 1884, and died prematurely in 1887, aged 51. He had a large family, and left his wife destitute. She was so badly off that *John Warrick* organised a campaign by posting advertisements in national newspapers to raise enough money for William's widow so that she didn't end up in the workhouse. How successful he was I don't know, but it speaks volumes of the man.

Of course, *John Warrick* wasn't destined to earn his fame and fortune in the firearms business; it was manufacturing and selling tricycles to mobile ice cream sellers and 3-wheeler delivery vans to Department Stores, small businesses, and even the G.P.O, which of course is where the Perfin came in. At first glance, the article seems to be non-Perfin related, but it's really all about *John Warrick*, the suggested user of the Perfin, and how he got to where he did. However, I failed to find one crucial piece of information - when the company took on 'Limited' liability, I just assumed it was after the 1899 directory reference and before 1909, the date on the stamp. If it was after 1909 then I'm also '*up the Swanny without a paddle*'!

Sure enough, *John Mathews* provided the 'killer blow' which was this report in the '*Reading Standard*', 9th November 1912 ...

The well-known firm of John Warrick and Co., of "The Monarch Cycle Works," Caversham-road, Reading, who have lately made such strides—particularly with the Warrick Motor-Car—have been converted into a limited liability company, and are inviting applications for £20,000 6 p.c. preference shares. Prospectuses may be had on application early next week.

All of which is *proof* that 'Warrick & Co Ltd' could NOT have used the Perfin, which is dated 1909. Now, where's that paddle!

Article published as a salutary lesson that, wherever possible, all stones should be turned, and all loose ends tied!.