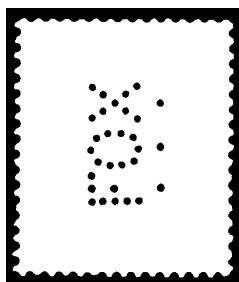


THE FULL NAME FOX (WITH THREE DOTS)

Roy Gault

As part of the ongoing push to try and resolve who *might* have used the remaining 37 of the 688 ‘GB Full Name Perfins’ who have no known user, let’s have a look at “**FOX/...**” (F3120.01) in use in London SW, 1887-1905. The start date comes from an *undated* entry in one of Sloper’s Victorian *impression* books - shown below. The Press was N^o. **6842**, made by ‘*Eyles*’. Coupon Press N^o. **6824** which preceded it was provided with dies for 1887, so it’s reasonable to assume that our die was also made in 1887, or soon afterwards. I have two stamps, the two DDFs listed in ‘Gault’, which are shown below.

1887-1905



F3120.01

Note that the Perfin is reversed in one reading up the stamp, and the correct way round on the other reading down the stamp. This is a sure sign of a company owned Press, which we know to be true as in this particular case we even know the Sloper Press, N^o. **6842**!

John Mathews has a keen interest in Sloper’s workforce and lists in his ‘Sloper’s Engravers’ article (see B333, Dec 2004) Ralph Eyles, a 51 year old Mechanical Engineer, born London, living in Islington at the time of the 1901 UK census. Twenty years on I can add precious little other than that his full name was *Ralph Cornelius Eyles*, and that his birth was registered at St Pancras, 3rd Qtr 1849. His death is also recorded at Islington, 3rd Qtr 1920 aged 71 years. His marriage to Mary Annie Andrews, also in Islington, is recorded, 1st Qtr 1876. I’ve only gone down this route because I couldn’t find him in the 1881 Census, so all we can do is celebrate his life with a simple ...

Ralph Cornelius Eyles (1849-1920)

So we know **When** the Perfin die was made (c1887), and by **Whom** (Ralph Eyles), but what about **Who** might have used it - three important Ws. With it ending in an “X” we can safely assume it’s the surname ‘Fox’. Knowing the die in use dates are 1887-1905, I first consulted an **1895** London directory which had a long list of FOX surnames which I reduced to 17 by only recording those who worked in London SW. I listed them all regardless of their trade (green grocer, dressmaker, etc), and then checked in the **1902** edition to see how many of them stood the test of time. There were just four ...

Fox & Thickness (Solicitors) who by 1902 had become ‘Fox, Thickness & Hull’, so I discounted them. Then there was **Charles Fox** (Oil & Colourman), **Sir Douglas Fox** (Civil Engineer) who was listed as ‘**Sir Douglas Fox & Partners**’ in 1902; and **Francis Fox** (Civil Engineer at the same address as Sir Douglas Fox), so I discounted him. Thus it’s a toss-up between the oil & colourman, who was a sole trader, and the civil engineering enterprise.

To help resolve the situation I looked at an **1891** London directory. This time it was only arranged under Trades so a little more difficult to research. However, the result was that there was ***no mention*** of Charles Fox under Agents - Color, Color Manufacturers, and Color Merchants (yes, they did spell colour like that in those days), but Sir Douglas Fox is listed as a Civil Engineer at 28 Victoria St, London SW. This tells me that he’s our ‘Fox’. More than that, by far the larger company was ‘**Sir Douglas Fox and Partners**’, so it makes sense that they are the likely user of the Perfin. But what can we find out about him? It turns out that he’s a famous engineer, so there’s plenty about him on the Internet! Let’s start with his basic details ...

Sir Charles Douglas Fox (1840-1921)

His obituary runs for two pages in the Journal of the Institute of Civil Engineers (Vol CCXIII), so any details reported here will be brief!

Charles Douglas Fox was born at Smethwick on 14th May 1840 - just eight days after the introduction of the 1d Black & 2d Blue - the eldest surviving son of Sir Charles Fox, an eminent Civil Engineer.

Needless to say, Charles Douglas Fox was well educated becoming a fellow of King's College, London, and in 1858 was articled to his father, who by then was practising in Westminster. In 1860, he and his brother (later Sir) Francis Fox were taken into partnership, forming '*Sir Charles Fox & Sons*' until the death of their father in 1874.

It was at this point that Charles Douglas Fox became the senior partner, and in 1886 a knighthood was conferred on him in recognition of his work on the Mersey Tunnel, which connected Liverpool with Birkenhead. This prompted a renaming of the firm to '*Sir Douglas Fox and Partners*'.



The list of civil engineering projects undertaken by the company, both home and abroad (Argentina, Nyasaland, Rhodesia, India, Colombia, and Australia to mention but a few), is impressively long but principally they were involved in railways, along with the construction of tunnels and bridges, docks and slipways. His principal earlier work was the construction of the 'London, Chatham and Dover Railway', and the 'London Brighton and South Coast Railway'.



Nº. 5 '**Moel Siabod**' built in 1896 by the Swiss Locomotive and Machine Works of Winterthur, Switzerland.

Perhaps the most unusual engineering project undertaken by the company was their involvement in the construction of the '*Snowdon Mountain Railway*' which officially opened on 6th April 1896. How many of you, I wonder, have sat patiently in those open wagons?