

## **CHRISTY & Co. – HAT MAKERS**

**Melvyn Green**



Miller Christy was born in 1748 in Haddington, Scotland and in 1763 was apprenticed in "The art and mystery of felt making" in Edinburgh. Subsequently in 1773 and in partnership with fellow Quaker, Joseph Storrs, they set up as Hat Manufacturers in White Hart Court, London. When Storrs retired in 1794, Christy's two sons, Thomas & William joined the firm.

**Miller Christy** The business flourished and in 1824 took over the Stockport felt and hat-making works allowing them to increase production. When the Bowler Hat was invented in 1849 by Lock & Co and the Bowler Brothers, it immediately became popular. Christy's, from its factory in Bermondsey, became one of the largest British manufacturers of this iconic style. This was closely followed by the Top Hat popularised by Prince Albert as the everyday style for the British Gentleman, so Christy's opened a retail hat store at 1 Old Bond St., at the corner of Piccadilly.

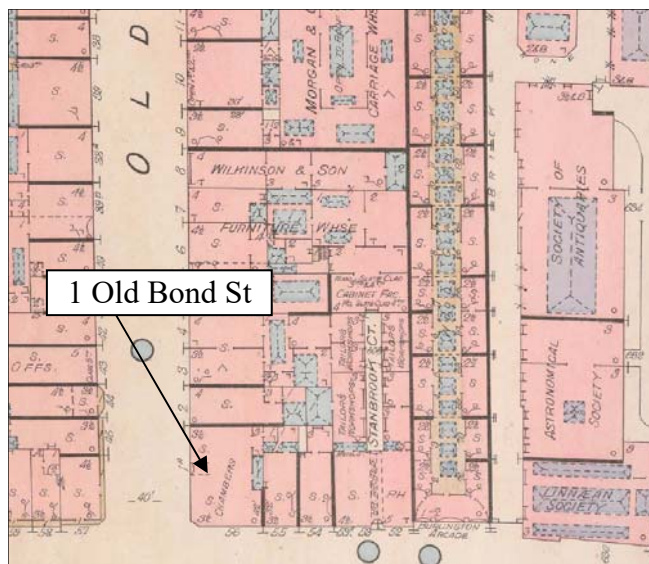


**1 Old Bond Street**



In 1876 The Trade Mark Registration Act enabled Christy's to register its London Trade Mark with Royal Garter, unchanged ever since. By now they are also making headwear for the Armed Forces ranging from hats and helmets together with Naval Tricorns and Musician caps. In the last decade of the 19th century, the Trilby Hat acquired mass appeal and so was added to their manufacturing range. By now they had over 3,000 people in Stockport alone making them the world's largest hat manufacturer. Today they still make the Trilby's in the same way. The business continued to be successful as everybody wore hats and in 1920 the Snap Rim felt hat was introduced and popularised by the Prince of Wales, which could be worn with both lounge suit and sports clothes.

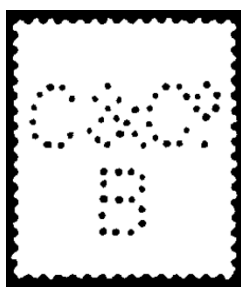
After World War II, with the gradual decline in hat wearing, consolidation of the hat industry started so Christy's acquired the famous hat brands of Henry Heath, Tress & Co and Lincoln Bennett and the store at No 1 Old Bond Street was sold to Lock & Co. In 1990's they closed the Stockport Works and consolidated all operations at Witney, Oxen with sister company Compton Webb. Christy's were now concentrating on the upper end of the market and the Christy Beaufort range of riding hats was successfully launched which proved very popular.



At the beginning of the New Millennium stylish hats became popular again and in 2010, the famous department store Liberty acquired Christy & Co and Compton Webb, to help introduce a new wave of stylish hat wearers in collaboration with great British brands. There was also a special edition Fedora hat sold through Harrods and they became Official Supplier for Wimbledon Tennis Championships of Genuine Panama hats which were also retailed through Marks & Spencer, Official Headwear Partners to Royal Ascot and official supplier to Juventus, PSG and the Football Association. They also opened a 4th retail outlet, this time in Windsor and are still trading today in 2020. Christy's used seven different perfin dies between 1883 and 1948 as shown below.

Although the company was well established at the time that Sloper introduced perfin, it wasn't until 1883 that Christy & Co decided to adopt them. As will be seen on the next page they are associated with seven different perfin dies between 1883 and 1948 which seems like quite a collection. However it should be remembered that the company had works in Stockport and Bermondsey, London SE as well as showrooms at 1 Old Bond St and offices in Gracechurch St. With all these locations it might not be surprising that more than one die was in use at a time.

1883 - 1887

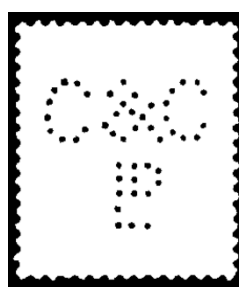


C1550.02



Brighton

1887 - 1895

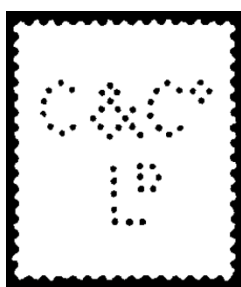


C1420.01Ø



London EC, SE

1895 - 1903

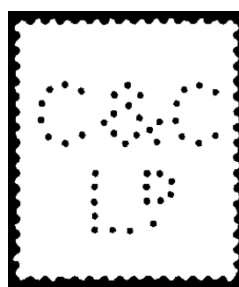


C1600.03Ø



London EC, SE

1895 - 1948

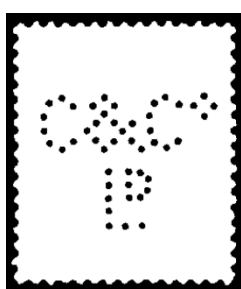


C1430.01



Stockport

1895 - 1935

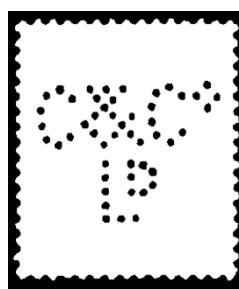


C1600.07



London

1903 - 1910

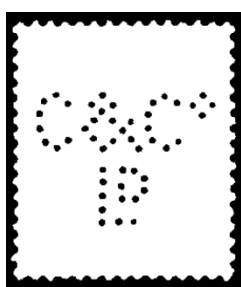


C1600.04Ø



London EC, SE

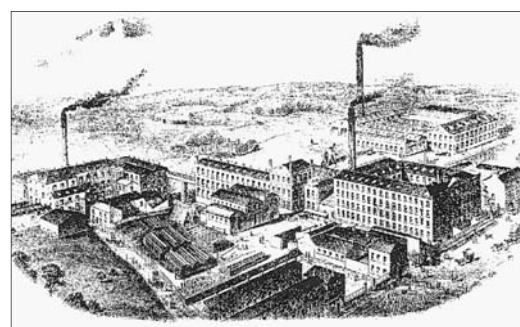
1920 - 1939



C1600.01



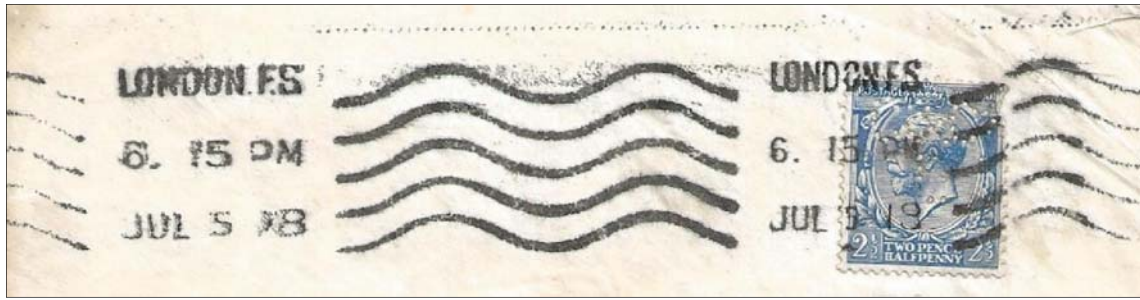
London, Bristol



Christy Works - Stockport

Shown here are the seven dies. Note that C1600.01 is shown used in Bristol. A shop was opened by Christy in Bishopton, Bristol around 1920. Shown on the next page are three covers used by Christy. The first is London use of their most long lived die – C1600.07. The second shows use of their Stockport die and the third show the use of their Bristol die. All use of perfins seems to have been abandoned shortly after the Second World War.

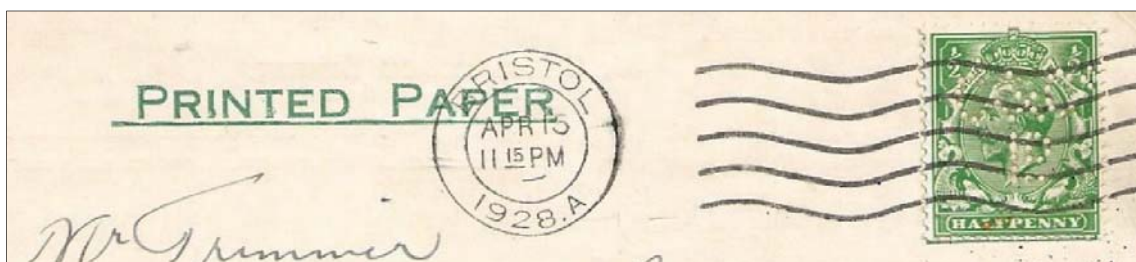




Above is a KGV censored envelope with 2½d blue SG371 perfined C&Co/Ld (C1600.07). Sent by Christy & Co Ltd, Hat Manufacturers, 105 Bermondsey Street, Bermondsey, London SE to Copenhagen, Denmark on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1918 with London FS and wavy lines, cancels. Opened by Censor 438 and has the embossed name on the reverse.



Illustrated above is a KGV trade post card with 1d red SG357 perfined C&C/Ld. (C1430.01) and on the reverse the identity of Christy & Co Ltd, Hat Manufacturers, Stockport, Cheshire. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century over 3,000 people worked in their Stockport factory. The card was sent 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1922 to St. Etienne, France with single ring Stockport and wavy line cancels. The text on the card relates to a Stock-Take to be undertaken on 4<sup>th</sup> October. This die was in use between 1895 and 1948.



Above is a KGV trade post card with ½d green SG418 perfined C&Co/Ld (C1600.01) and identity of Christy & Co Ltd, Hat Manufacturers, 35 Gracechurch Street, London EC3 and 52 Seymour Avenue, Bishopston, Bristol. The postcard was sent 15<sup>th</sup> April 1928 to Ringwood, Hants with double ring Bristol "A" and wavy line cancel. This die was in use between 1920 and 1939.