

Army & Navy Co-operative Society Limited

Rosemary Smith

Formed in 1871, on the initiative of Major F B McCrea, as *Army & Navy Co-operative Society Limited*, to supply members with goods for domestic consumption as cheaply as possible without profit. Membership was open to, '*officers, non-commissioned officers and petty officers, serving, or who had served, in the army, navy, militia or yeomanry; the widows of officers, the secretaries or other recognised officers of the military and naval clubs and representatives of regimental and naval messes and canteens*'.

It was based on the model of two earlier middle-class Co-operatives, the *Civil Service Supply Association*, [who used perfins not included in this study]and, *Civil Service Co-operative Society* [who did not use perfins]. Members were entitled to deal at the store, share in profits and have certain goods delivered free. Annual membership tickets were issued. The initial capital of £15,000 was divided into 15,000 £1 shares.

As profits increased, a gentleman's club, restaurants, reading rooms, travel agencies and a range of other services were soon offered. Premises in Victoria Street, London were leased and "*The Stores*", as these premises became known, opened on 15th February 1872 for the sale of groceries, stationery, drapery, perfumery, fancy goods, and Tailoring. During the first five months sales amounted to £38,787, the profit being over £6,000. Branches were opened in the provinces and the publication of an annual price list started a mail order business.

By early 1873 "*The Stores*" were regularly overcrowded and an adjacent property in Victoria Street was leased. Free membership tickets with share purchases was abandoned. By 1875 the Society was also running a banking department by holding member's money on deposit for interest. A Paris agency was also opened in this same year.

In 1876 the growing manufacturing activities of the Society outgrew their premises and new workshops were acquired. Tailoring, shirt making, printing and the making of portmanteaus were increased. In 1878, the premises in Victoria Street having been bought outright, a new building

was completed on the site. The sales were enormous and a huge cut in prices was ordered. As the general public could buy at "The Stores", middle-class shoppers flocked to buy their merchandise at 'real cost'. Other stores lobbied Parliament about unfair competition but a select committee set up to look into the trading ruled that there was no evidence to justify the closing of "The Stores". Some stores, like Harrods, adopted the co-operatives low-price policy and gained from their popularity.

In 1880 the *Army & Navy Auxiliary Co-operative Supply Ltd* was established to supply fresh provisions, boots, furniture and estate agency services. The "Supply" and the "Society" shared the same management and membership and the two organisations merged in 1919.

"The Stores" were always intent to serve the interests of the Army and Navy abroad and in 1891 a depot in Bombay, India was opened, followed by one at Karachi and in 1902 in Calcutta.

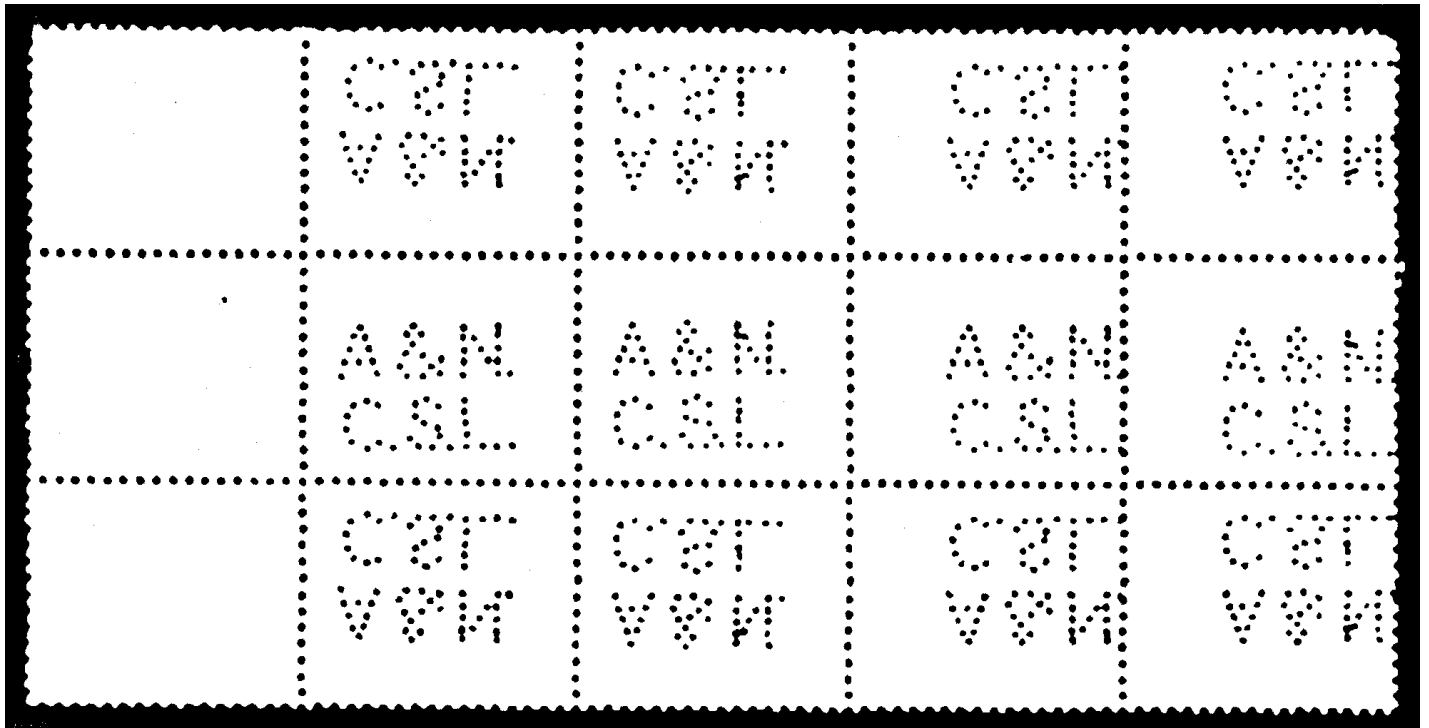
In 1934 the name was changed to *Army & Navy Stores Ltd*. The last branches in India were disposed of in 1952. The Army & Navy Stores Ltd was acquired in 1973 by House of Fraser Ltd.

Until Roy Gault begins to work on the 'A' section of the New Illustrated Catalogue, the following A&N/CSL are the range of dies known to date. These illustrations come from Roy and after comparing your own examples with these, if you have any different dies, either put on one side until the 'A' letter is started or send to Roy for photocopying.

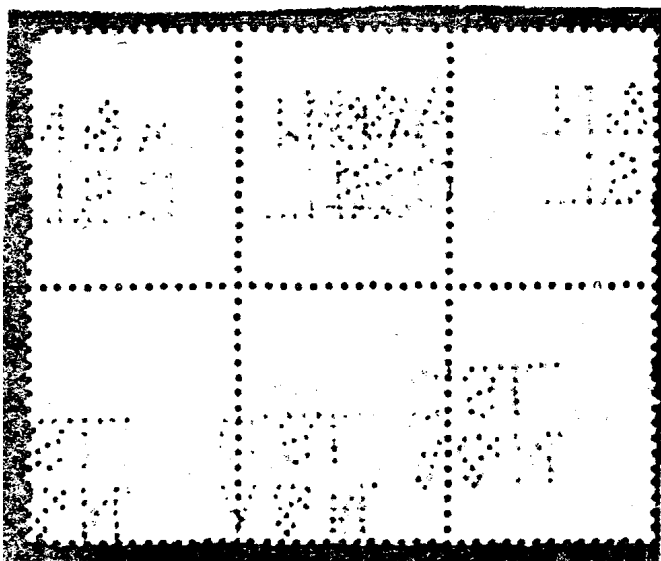
In Bulletin 302 I will give details of the C/AN/S dies, the line/AUX/line dies and the AN dies which were used by the Army & Navy Co-operative Society Ltd.

My first observation about these perfins is that I believe the identity is incorrect. In Tomkins IC8 the identity for the A&N/C.S.L. perfins is *Army & Navy Civil Supply Co Ltd*. In all my research and on all my identified covers this name does NOT appear. The name is always **ARMY & NAVY CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LIMITED**. As mentioned in the above text, the Civil Supply Association was in business before the Army & Navy Co-op Soc.Ltd but they were not associated with each other.

My second observation is that there is likely to be a number of these dies put together as 'M' for 'multi-headed die' when Roy looks at them in greater detail as he comes to study the 'A' section. My reason for saying this is the following illustration of a block of 15 1d lilacs showing two different dies, A4510.01a + an unlisted die, and a block of 6 1d lilacs showing A4510.01a and 4510.01b in the block. Stephen Steere sent the block of 6 but the holes of the die were not clear cut, hence the poor photocopy. Again, if you have multiples of this very common perfin, please check for different dies.

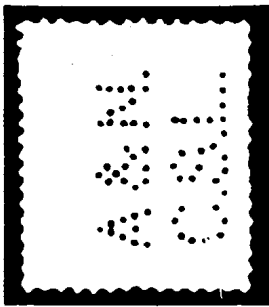


Block of 15 showing evidence for a 2x1 multiheaded die. Unlisted + A4510 .01a
 Piece is postmarked South West District/Parcel Post/Depot and dated 18/9/1890.



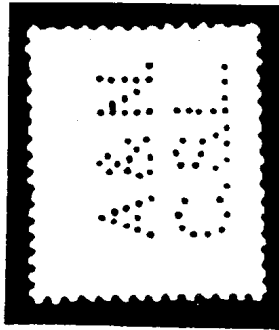
Thanks go to The Archives & Business Record Centre at The University of Glasgow who hold the archives for The Army & Navy Stores. Miss Vanora Skelley, Manager of the Business Record Centre, proved most helpful and it is from the photocopies of various papers I received that I extracted the "bones" of this history. Thanks to Roy Gault for the perfin die illustrations and Stephen Steere for his block of 1d lilacs

These dates are loose approximations.



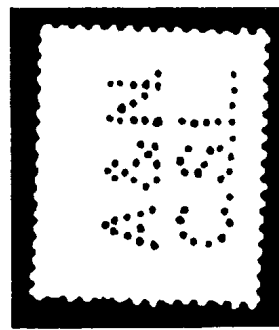
A4210.01
1d Lilac

1890-1995



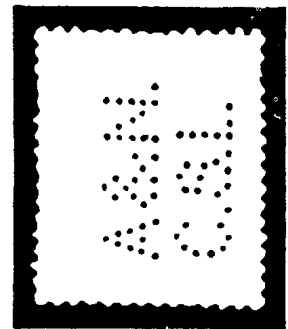
A4210.01aM
1d Lilac
2/8/1889

1889-1895



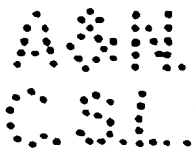
A4210.01b
1d Lilac
17/4/1886

c1886

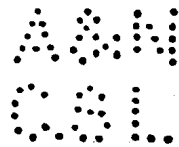


A4210.01c
Tall, Pointed 'C'
1d Lilac

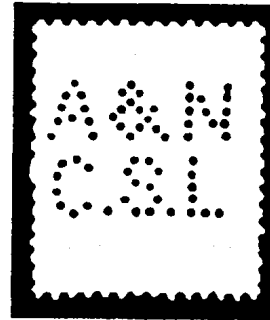
c1886



A4210.05
Type III '&'
Source n/k

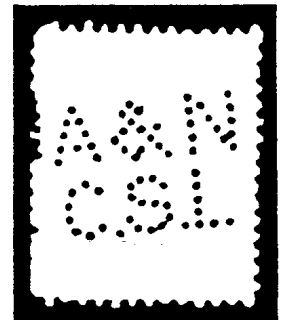


A4205.01
Ex Rosemary 8/90
1d Lilac

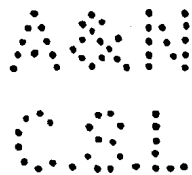


A4205.02
SG141 pl10

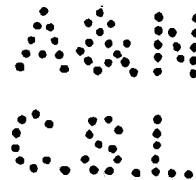
1886-1879



A4205.03



A4205.04
Ex S Steere
1d E7 PStat



A4205.05
Ex K Parkhill
1d E7 P Stat
Sloper m/c No.6084
DD 18/4/1908.