

Thos Cook Perfins – Part 1

By Tam Llewellyn-Edwards & Dick Scheper

This article is a history of Thos Cook & Son perfins world-wide. It has been prepared largely from the collection of the authors, and any additional information from readers' own collections will be most welcome.

Thomas Cook organised his first excursion, a charity rail excursion for the Temperance Society, in 1841. His commercial concern started with a advertised excursions for the general public in 1845. The firm of Thos Cook & Son was incorporated in 1872. The earliest dated perfins in the authors' collections are dated 1881, but Die 1 is known on SG43 plate 179 which must have been much earlier. Initially, the perfins were used in the United Kingdom, but their use spread world-wide as Thos Cook set up offices abroad. The company was effectively taken out of the family's control by "*Compagnie International des Wagon Lits*" in 1928, but the original name was retained and the use of the perfin continued. The company used perfins initially in the United Kingdom and later world-wide. The latest use known by the authors is on a Ceylonese issue of 1951(SG426).

Perfins on GB Issues

There are at least 47 recorded types of perfin dies used by Thos Cook & Son world-wide, and with so many new dies we have introduced a new numbering system. All known designs, with their die numbers, are shown in figures 1a & 1b.

Identification of Dies

These dies are often difficult to separate, and are best separated initially by the type and position of the ampersand used as follows:-

- Die 1** is rare and is easy to separate from the subsequent dies as it has a 'stop' between the 'T' and the 'C'.
- Die 2** has a type III ampersand with the ampersand centred directly below the stem of the 'T' and it has a 13 hole 'S'.
- Die 3** has a type IIIa ampersand and the ampersand is well to the left of the 'T'.
- Die 4** is similar to die 2, but its 'S' has only 9 holes and the ampersand is much closer to the stem of the 'T'.
- Die 5** has a type I ampersand, so is easily identified.

Dies 6, 7 and 9 also have ampersand III and can be separated as follows

- ❖ **Die 6** is 10mm wide (the same as die 4) but it has a larger ampersand that is centred to the right of the stem of the 'T'.
- ❖ **Die 7** is 9mm wide with the ampersand centred to the left of the stem of the 'T'. This die can be separated from Die 4 as the ampersand is further from the 'T'.
- ❖ **Die 8** is 9.5mm wide with the ampersand centred directly below the stem of the 'T' It can be separated from die 2 by its greater width and because the ampersand is further from the 'F'.
- ❖ **Die 9** is very similar to die 7, but has slightly smaller letters.

Die 10 has ampersand la.

Die 11 is similar to die 6 but the ampersand is not as far to the right of the stem of the 'T' and it is only 9.5mm wide. Except for early examples it is usually found with two missing pins in the 'T'.

Dies 12, 13 and 14

These are **POKO** type perfin and seem to have originated from at least two different machines as they are in use concurrently for long periods.

❖ **Die 12** has a 10 hole 'S'

❖ **Die 13** has a 9 hole 'S'

❖ **Die 14** has an 11 hole 'S'.

Die 15 is the only one of these perfin with the letters 'TC' only, so it is easily identified. It should be noted that this perfin is not exclusive to Thos Cook and some other companies use an identical die. More than one of these users are based in London so perfin off cover cannot be identified with Thos Cook & Son.

Usage.

The sequence of usage is roughly in line with the numbering system although there is considerable overlap when more than one die was in use at the same time.

Die 1 is known on SG 43 and must be the first die used. It is very rare.

Die 2 is found on the 1880-3 Imperial crown issues used in the period 1882-1884, while **Die 3** is also found on these issues but its use extends

into the Victorian Jubilee issues, and known dates in the period 1882-1898.

Die 4 is the most common and is known from the Id lilac issue through the Jubilee issues and into the issues of Edward VII until at least 1905. It is also known on the high value Edward VII issues (SG 261).

Die 5 appears to be rare and the authors can report it on SG 221, 225, 230 & 329.

Die 6 was first used on Edward VII issues and continued into the early George V period where it is also used on high value issues.

Die 7 also first appeared in the Edward VII period but its use continues right through George V issues and is also found on Edward VIII issues.

Die 8 starts in the George VI period and was used into the reign of Edward VIII.

Die 9 is first seen in the typographed George V period and stayed in use throughout the reign. It is known on the "Universal Postal Congress" issue.

Die 10 is a long-lived die. It came into use during the typographed George V period and stayed in use until well into the reign of George VI. It is known on the re-engraved high value George V issues.

Die 11 seems to have had a short period of use being only known on George V and Edward VIII issues.

Dies 12,13 & 14, the POKO dies, seem to have been used simultaneously during the George V, Edward VIII and George VI reigns. Die 13 could have been **Die 12** with a pin missing, but the two dies seem to have been used simultaneously so are probably from different machines. Die 14 has a completely different shaped 'S' and must have been from another machine - perhaps the first to be brought into use.

Die 15 is known from the early George VI issues. It could have been a "War Time Provisional" die. It is known used into Elizabeth II Wilding period, but it is not possible to separate Thos Cook & Son usage from the identical dies used by other firms.

All identifiable postmarks on GB issues appear to be from London.

