

COPESTAKE. CRAMPTON, ET AL,

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Roy Gault thought that offering prizes for displays at our meetings would stimulate members to write articles for the Bulletin. Well, this started as an idea for a display but shortage of material but plenty of information has turned this into an article but no display.

I wrote an article on Copestakes in Bulletin 257, 10 years ago, and although I received much added information from members, in response to that article, any mistakes here are my own, so feel free to correct any errors. I apologise for not collating this extra info before but I'm afraid that when I write an article much of my enthusiasm has evaporated and it takes a long time to get back to it and it often needs a different perspective before I am fired again.

I thought who better to illustrate the history of perfins than the firm of wholesale drapers, Copestake, Crampton & Co.? After all, I think they must take some of the credit for the application of perfins to postage stamps. Joseph Sloper had invented the "indelible cancelling of bills or cheques by perforating with words" in 1858. Sampson Copestake must have had one of these perforators and spoken to Sloper about applying it to stamps for it was Copestake who first approached the Post Office for approval to perforate stamps in October 1867. Copestakes asked if they could underprint stamps for their own mail and perfin stamps received as payment.

Member John Nelson owns the only known example of this perfin in private hands, "SC", also underprinted "Copestake, Moore, Crampton & Co London" cancelled with a pen cross. It is on a 1d red plate 73, this plate was put to press in 1864 and is one of a number of copies sent to the Post Master General. (I wonder what happened to the die? I bet Sloper reused it!!) But the PMG was reluctant at first and it took some time for Sloper to get his approval. By that time, it seems, Copestakes had adopted underprints and continued to use them until 1880 at least, if not until 1882 when the Post Office banned underprints in favour of perfins. So Copestake's perfins cannot be used to illustrate this first 10 years of perfins.

From 1880 to 1900 Copestakes used perfins with various letters (see list at the end of article), but use of these and the earlier underprints seem to bear little relationship to the initials of the partners at the time.

So I digress for a moment to give details of the names of the partnership. To start with in the 1860's it was Copestake, Moore, Crampton & Co. The Moore disappeared c1877, to be replaced by Hughes who didn't fare much better, being replaced by Lindsay in the mid 80's. Lindsay survived until at least 1900 when perfin use became a bit clearer. Despite these dates it seems that from 1880 to 1885 underprints and perfins were used without discrimination. The underprint with Moore's name included was used from 1867 to 1879 (last 1d plate known used pl 224 put to press 1879) and in one case (Phil Butcher-Bulletin 274.17) until 1881, about 4 years after Moore had left. Yet the Hughes underprint is only known used up to 1d plate 222 (put to press a month earlier than plate 224 above!) although it is known used on 1d Venetian red issued 14/10/80. In fact the Hughes underprint is termed unofficial, i.e. not printed by the stamp printers (under the gum). I cannot determine what was the earliest date of use from plate numbers as any particular printing could have been late usage of a plate. In fact first usage based on the date a plate was first put to press is only slightly misleading.

Confused? Well, I will come to the perfins. There was no perfin with Moore's name in (ie CMC etc) but it has been stated that the perfins with Hughes' in (CHC etc) had means of masking Moore's name in the underprint. This was by means of a box in the perfin or possibly a plus sign or line (unproved identity as yet). No example has ever borne this out, the boxes never really masked Moore's name. It seemed these perfined underprints are not rare and their early usage, from 1880-84 might well fit in with a perfin being used to mask a word in an underprint that was still in use. But why was it still in use? Why not stop using the Moore underprint and only use the Hughes one? It does not help that the Lindsay perfin 'CL/+ /CC⁰' was used almost from the earliest time, 1881, right up till Copestake Crampton perfins came into use in 1900.

This last perfin, with the '+' in, is my reason for suggesting that the 2 unidentified perfins 'CH/+ /C⁰' were used by Copestake Hughes. It would be nice to think that the other unidentified perfin in my list, 'C/- /H.C, is in fact a squatter version of the 'C/ /HC perfin and it was intended to mask

Hughes name on the underprints on the ½d bantam. This however is entirely wrong: this perfin is NOT known on these stamps.

In conclusion to this first part we can see that the Moore underprint and the Hughes perfin were used when the people were no longer partners. But is this correct? The different partners of Gregory, Rowcliffe & Partners, solicitors of Bedford Street off the Strand, used different perfins. I know from my days of working for partnerships that the partners fees depended on seniority, whose client it was and who got, or did the work. Were the partners in Copestakes at different offices: is this supported by postmark evidence? Since starting this article I came across a small accumulation of 'CC/&C^o'. C1290.02 seem only to be postmarked Birmingham whilst C1290.02a are postmarked London and Birmingham, all c1914.

Perfin use after 1900 is slightly clearer, the firm was just styled Copestake, Crampton & Co. although a Lindsay is listed as partner in c 1914, and there were 3 Cramptons but no Copestake, presumably he had died. However, although dies ending just "&C^o" were in use to c1930, other dies ending "CoLd" were used simultaneously until 1936. So we get no clean break where the firm took Limited status and stopped using "&Co" and started using "&CoLd", although they were in fact registered as a limited company in 1920 and had just 2 Cramptons as directors in 1938.

I had started other research when I noticed that Copestakes were added in typescript on a list of Allchin clients prepared c1905. Did Copestake show no loyalty to Slopers? In a later article I hope to show that it is possible to identify Allchin dies which end in "/Co.Ld.". I came across C1305.01, just such a die, but have no date or postmark information to confirm my theory. If you have copies of this die with readable postmarks, perhaps you can let me have the details.

Eventually a POKO machine came into use and Mr Phelby in Bulletin 315.11&12 tells of its destruction in the blitz, at least we can be certain about that.

Finally Sloper perfined stamps for Copestakes with the "CC" 12x1 die that he made just after the blitz for all his 'CC clients. He did not use a provisional. I am unsure of the last identified usage of this die for Copestakes.

It does seem there is a lot of work to be done here with dates and postmarks but I doubt it can be finalised until Roy gets to the "C" section of the New Illustrated Catalogue, if then!

LIST OF COPESTAKE PERFINS

S1210.08	SC	1868		IDENTIFIED	
C3130.01	C/-/H.C	1881-82	NOT	“	
C3195.01	CHC/[]	1880-84		“	
C3400.01	C/[]/HC	1880-85		“	
C3160.01	CH+/+C	1884	NOT	“	
C3160.02	CH+/+C ^o	?	NOT	“	
C4370.01	CL+/+CC ^o	1881-1900		“	
C1290.02a	CC/&C ^o	1900-25		IDENTIFIED	
C1290.02	CC/&C ^o	1905-15		“	
C1300.01	CC/C ^o Ld	1900-36		“	
C1305.01	CC/C ^o .d.		NOT	“	Allchin Die?
C1295.01	C.C/&C ^o .	?		“	
C 1290.04	CC/&C ^o	1925-30		“	
C1300.02	CC/C ^o Ld	C1938		“	
C1380.02	CC/L	1932-40		“	POKO
C1110.01	CC	1941-95?		“	Sloper 12x1

Until the blitz Copestakes offices were in Bow Churchyard off Cheapside in the City of London. They had an office in the Tottenham Court Road in the 50's but are not listed in the 80's.

So all this from an idea of making a display for the London meeting showing the history of the use of perfins!



