SEARCHING FOR PERFORATORS

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As my existing homemade perforating device (Des 1120.01) was worn out, I decided to search on the Internet for a company capable of making a machine for perfinning stamps.

Both Cummins-Allison and American Perforator make document-cancelling machines in the USA, but prices are well into 4 figures! Next I tried looking through the library for information on perforators made in recent years.

Baddeley Brothers in London used to make perforators for postage stamps - in the 1970s and 1980s they supplied several machines to individuals in the USA, the last recorded being in 1988 for Hubert L. Norris[(1)]. I found their website but unfortunately they now only supply stationery with embossing, foil blocking etc., and no longer make perforators.

In fact, it was noted in the Perfins Bulletin in January 1996[(2)] that Baddeley Brothers no longer made perforators, but that a firm in Carshalton called Chainstream had made a model FD3 for John Lyding at a cost of £120. They also made a machine of the same model for the Perfins Club of New Zealand & Australia in 1997[(3)] for A$434. Unfortunately I could find no reference to the company on the Internet although Chris Carr has managed to track them down.

Back on the Internet, I found that Shaw & Sons in Kent still make a ballot-perforating machine with 25 removable pins set in a 5 x 5 grid format. The pins are of 1.5mm diameter, which seems to be a standard size for document perforators, but Royal Mail stipulate that the holes must be no larger than those separating the stamps, which are only about half that diameter.

I then found the website of Rubber Stamp of Northampton (http://www.rubberstamp.uk.com) who had a ballot perforator, very similar to that offered by Shaw & Sons, for £68 plus VAT and delivery. More promisingly, they also offered (price on application) a manual perforator to perforate any fixed word required. I emailed

them to ask what size pins they used and was told usually 1.5mm, but other sizes could be obtained for the fixed word perforator, but not for the ballot machine.

Having explained to them my requirements for perforating postage stamps (a use for their machines which I don't think they had ever heard of!) they said they could make such a machine at a cost of £190 for a single letter or £310 for two letters, plus VAT and delivery. Further emails established that they could produce any reasonable design, so I decided to continue the geometric theme of my previous square perfin by choosing a 12-pin triangle, which they made for the single letter price.

The machine arrived at the beginning of April, and I first used stamps with my new perfin on 9th April 2006. I will only perforate UK stamps that were on sale at this date or later.

The machine is made entirely out of metal and is quite small, the base being about 3" x 6½", but very heavy for its size. It seems well made and operates very smoothly. I find that to get a really clear perforation it is best to place a piece of plain paper beneath the stamp to be perforated.

Visiting the Rubber Stamp website again recently, I see that they now illustrate my triangle design as an example of their perforators!

If anyone else is interested in getting their own perforator, I'll be happy to help if you contact me at the address on the front page. Anyone wanting a sample of my new perfin on cover can send me a mint first class stamp (UK) or a $1 note (overseas).

Sources

1. "Vanity Perfins", Perfins Bulletin, Feb. 2001, 55, (2), 29
2. "Anchor Perfin", Perfins Bulletin, Jan. 1996, 50, (1), 1
3. "Club Perforator", South Pacific Perfins Bulletin, Apr. 1998, (41), 3-4