

'SPG' TYPES EXPLAINED

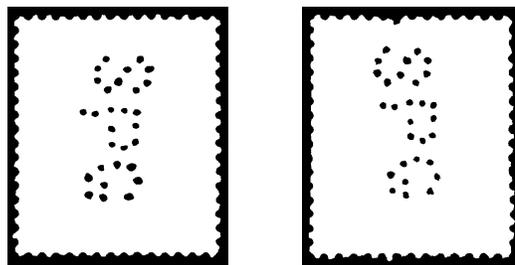
Roy Gault

Way back in 1994, whilst preparing the sheets for Section 'S' of the 'New Illustrated Catalogue', it became apparent that a great number of perfin 'variations' reported over the years could be explained if individual letters had been 'clamped' together to produce the required initials. The 'Eureka' moment came when the plethora of "SPG" patterns then in existence were reached - hence the name. However, I didn't know enough at the time to catalogue them accurately, and lamely called them S5900.00. In my defence, I did devote a whole page to them and illustrated a good few examples. These particular SPG's were naturally all of the 3-letter type, but since then we can now recognise both 2-letter and single-letter types. Even a solitary 4-letter type has been reported, although this presents an enigma - see later.

What are the basic assumptions?

1. Individual letters were 'clamped' together to produce the initials.

The 'proof' is the occurrence of a characteristically wonky "P" known in at least two different positions. It may well be that others have noticed this particular "P" used to make up other initials - *if you have, I would be interested to know.*

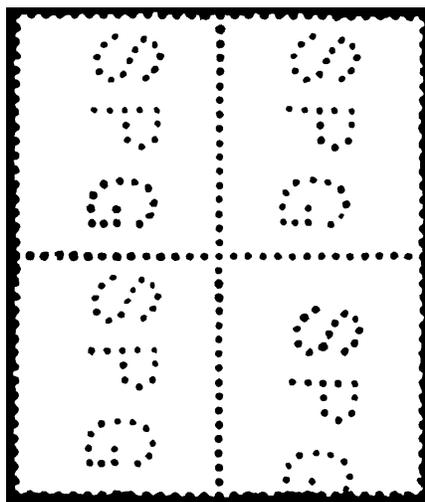


2. Three-letter 'SPG' types always read down the stamp (with the monarch's head upright), whereas single, 2-letter, and 4-letter examples are always upright. None have yet been found reversed.

Difficult to 'prove', but no-one has yet reported an example that contravenes any of these tenets. *If you have any that do, again I would be very pleased to hear from you.*

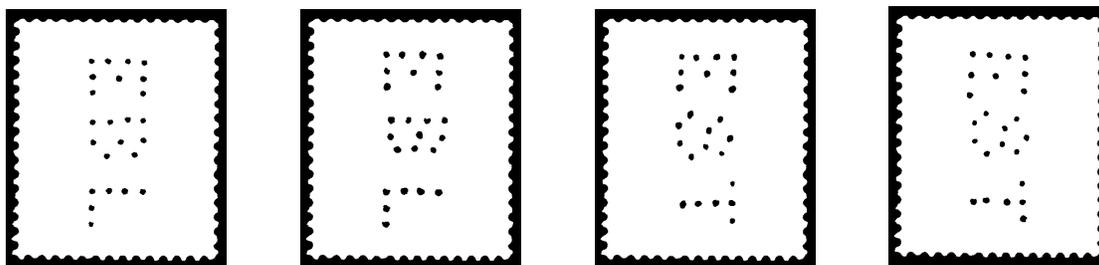
3. The ‘made-up’ die was single headed in that only one set of initials could be produced with one strike of the die. Admittedly, multiple sheets of stamps (possibly three, four or more) would have been initialled at each strike.

The ‘proof’ offered is the 2x2 block illustrated in the G.B. Perfins catalogue. It does not show the constant spacing expected between neighbouring patterns if the ‘die’ was multiheaded, 20.5mm horizontally or 24.5mm vertically for a definitive sized stamp. Furthermore, each pattern is ‘identical’ to it’s neighbour.



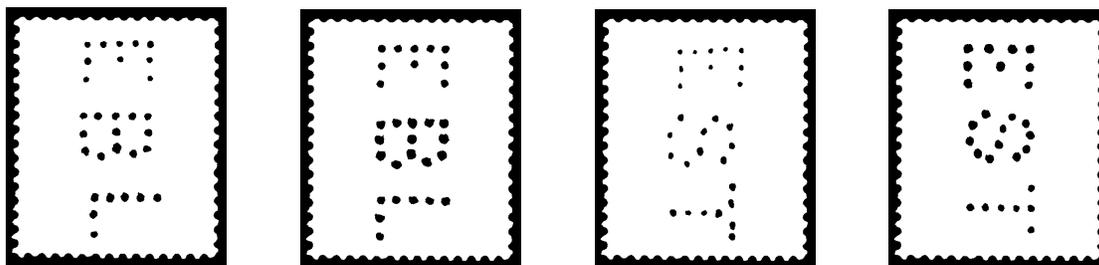
4. There are two basic types of letters used with a change-over date of c1906, give-or-take a year either way. In the past I have referred to them as ‘large’ and ‘small’ letters, but this is potentially misleading and in future they will simply be referred to as either ‘earlier’ (i.e. c1906 or before) or ‘later’ (i.e. c1906 or after).

The ‘later’ type is easier to recognise as the letters are **4-pins high** and ‘small’, usually in the range 4.5 mm to 5 mm high.



Examples of the ‘later SPG type’ of “EBL” (E0415.01v) and “EST” (E4460.01v) showing the typical variation that can be found.

The ‘earlier’ versions of these two sets of lettering show the use of letters that are usually (but not always!) 5-pins high, and generally bigger, usually in the range 5.5 mm to 6.5 mm.



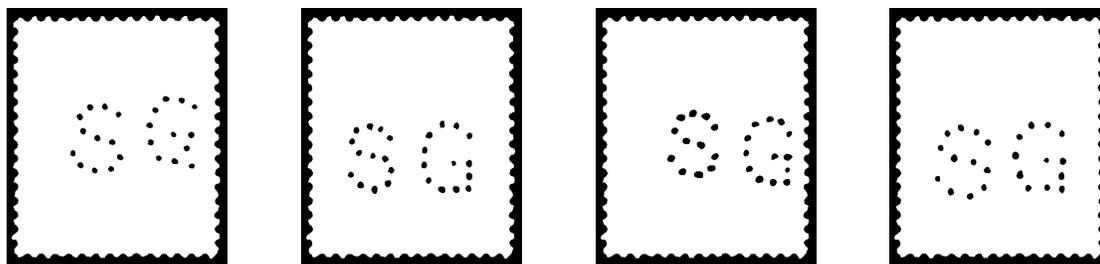
Examples of the ‘later SPG type’ of “EBL” (E0415.02v) and “EST” (E4460.02v) showing the typical variation that can be found.

The suffix ‘v’ warns collectors that ‘variations’ can be expected, not only in the position of the letters, but also in their shape, size, and pin-count.

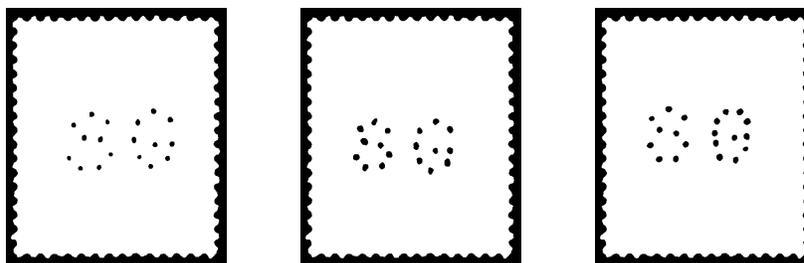
5. Two-letter types.

Brentford and Chiswick postmarks link all these examples to ‘Stratton, Gentry & Co, Coal Merchants, Brentford & Chiswick’.

‘Earlier’ examples pre c1906. 4th example is dated 16th Oct 1906.



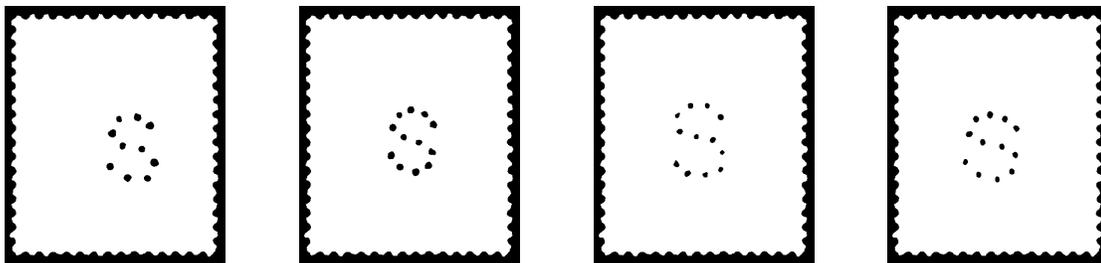
‘Later examples, post c1906. 3rd example is dated 25th Mar 1907.



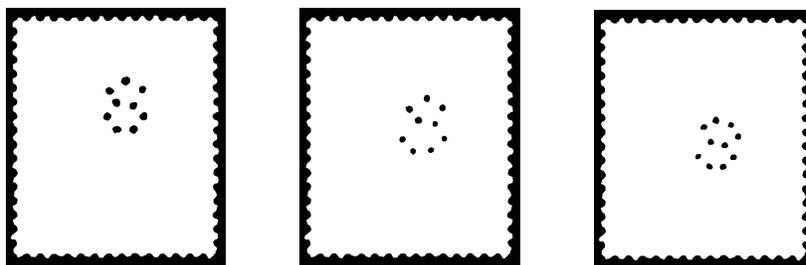
6. Single-letter types.

Inevitably, these are the most difficult to spot, but again Chiswick postmarks give the game away for these single-letter S's. Again, almost certainly used by 'Stratton, Gentry & Co, Coal Merchants, Brentford & Chiswick'.

'Earlier' examples pre c1906. 4th example is dated 30th July 1906.

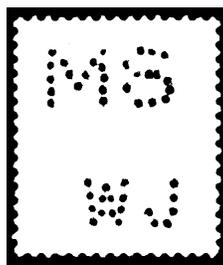


'Later examples, post c1906.



7. 4-letter type.

Just one example of such a beast has been reported, "MS/WJ" (M5410.02v), on a Queen Victoria Jubilee ½d (verm) postmarked '766' Swindon, and dating to c1895.



The enigma presented here is that a mixture of 5-pin and 4-pin high letters has been used, and such small 4-pin high letters are unknown in any other 'SPG' types from the Victorian era.

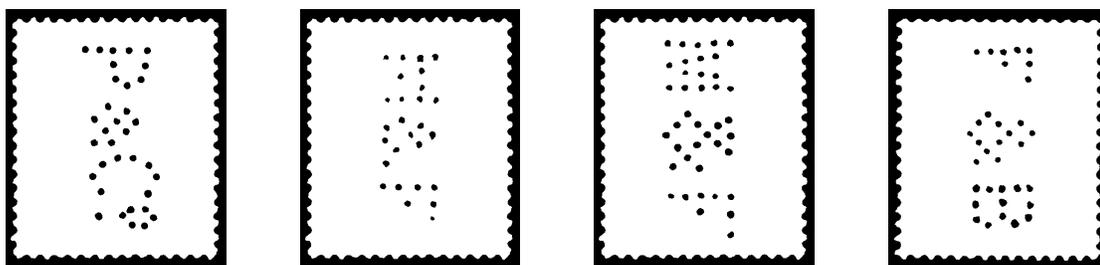
8. Change-over date, c1906.

The three dates shown previously for “S” and “SG” are typical of the latest/earliest dates generally encountered, although I am well aware that ‘three swallows don’t make a summer’!

Sometimes later types do not exist for corresponding earlier types (and vice versa). Of course the company could have gone out of business, changed its name, or even used ‘conventional’ perfins such as YOST, in use from 1899 - see Bulletin No.327, page 16.

9. Ampersands.

A wide variety of ampersands have been noted on ‘SPG’ types, including two ‘minimal’ types shown in the first two illustrations.



10. The ‘Die’ Maker.

Dave Hill has established that ‘Waterlow & Son’ were the source for these ‘SPG’ type patterns, going back perhaps as far as c1885. He noticed that, J B Pash and J V Drake, users of ‘SPG’ types “JBP” and “JVD” respectively, were amongst the clients that Slopers ‘inherited’ from Waterlows. For more details, see Dave’s article in Bulletin No.293, pages 19-21.

Please note that this is only a brief summary of where we are currently at with the so-called ‘SPG’ types, and in no way represents a definitive work. I’m sure that discoveries lie ahead that will add to our knowledge of these patterns, and perhaps alter the way in which they are catalogued.

In passing, if anyone has any practical suggestions for a better way to classify the SPG’s, I would be pleased to hear from you.