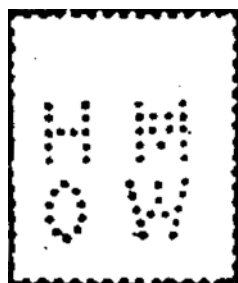


MORE ON THE HM/OW PERFIN

Dave Hill

I was surprised and pleased to be asked to give my opinion on two SG 172 1d lilac die II perfined HM/OW cancelled Liverpool Sept 23rd and Sept 20th 1895, by no less than the Royal Philatelic Society! Then I realised it was probably more for who I know, than for what I know! I wrote about official perfins in Bulletin 345 page 18 - 23 and at that time had just seen and had colour photocopies of the stamps and covers in David Milsted's collection. I knew that **John Nelson** had considered official perfins and his thoughts were similar to mine. Only **John Mathews** responded to my earlier article and I expect little response from this, not from lack of interest but from the fact that few of these perfins have survived (unless you have lots and are not telling anyone!)

I was surprised how much "new" information could be extracted from the meagre details but it hinges around the early dates of these stamps that at first I thought suspect but later led me to the conclusion they were genuine.



H5150.01



O2015.01

Few copies are known of this perfin so there is no large body of data to which to refer but John Mathews tells me that W A Wiseman in a series of articles in Gibbons Stamp Monthly entitled "The Demise of the Departmental Overprints 1904. The View From the Official Side" (September, October and November 2005) states that "The P.O. replied on 11th June 1895 that they could not see the justification for a Office of Works overprint similar to the Inland Revenue one and suggested that the Office of Works write to Joseph Sloper & Co to get stamps perforated as they wished". Slopers were approached on the 8th August and their quote of the 9th was reproduced in my previous article. Wiseman goes on to say that the 1d value was supplied on 15th (3600) and the ½d (2400) on 19th. W A Wiseman in his book "The

De La Rue Years” says that the perfins were “issued to local offices in August 1895”.

The copies are early usage but perfins were reordered in October indicating that the initial supply had been exhausted. (The second order was supplied with a different perfin die of crown over OW, which is an even rarer die). In fact Wiseman says that the first perfin “was unacceptable in use (?) and it was suggested (who by?) that a design incorporating a crown might be better but this proved equally unacceptable”. This whole episode is a bit strange, why were the perfins “unsuitable”, if you know what a perfin is, a perfin is a perfin. The Board of Trade perfin had been around since 1881 - 14 years. The overprint was no work of art! Was the Office of Works just being difficult, they had wanted an overprint all along but had to go along with what the P.O. said and try a perfin? Eventually the Office of Works got their overprint on 24th March 1896, all overprints were withdrawn in 1904 (but I’ve said before, was the BOT perfin classed as an overprint? It was, I think, produced by the BOT themselves, on a number of machines).

Back to the stamps, the perfin is not known to be forged, unlike the HMOW overprint and the Board of Trade perfin. The perfin die exactly matches the known die and is clean cut, as one would expect from Sloper’s own work and a die that had little usage (25 sheets of stamps).

The die is genuinely known used on piece cancelled Liverpool Jan 28th 1897 and another on cover postmarked Southampton 28th Sept 1896 but both perfins are on the ½d vermilion along with an overprinted 1d, indicating that the 1d value perfins were soon used up whilst the ½d value weren’t. (Both the piece and cover were in the collection of David Milsted). From another reference a perfin is known used in Liverpool 11/2/96 (die and value unknown).

I can’t be sure if the cancelling ink has penetrated the holes of the perfin or soaked in the paper but this is not an infallible test. Commonly the cancelling ink does not penetrate the holes and the underlying paper of the envelope does not receive ink. By this time, while cancels may have been heavy on the stamps, the ink was usually formulated so it was not runny and soaked through to the contents.

[Ed:- The 23rd Sept stamp referred to in this piece is illustrated on the back page. It was put up for sale at £500 on e-bay during March]