

REVENUES & PERFINS

PRIVATE REVENUE PERFINS BY DAVE ELSMORE & DAVID COATH

Dingle Smith FAP

Older collectors will remember when revenue stamps especially those with manuscript cancellations were tucked away at the back of a dealer's stock book at what would now be regarded as give-away prices. The introduction by FIP of a separate Revenue Class in the late 1980s prompted an upsurge of interest and research in this field. Prices for all but the most common material have escalated especially for documents with revenue stamps attached that illustrate usage..

For private perfins, ie those not used by government agencies for postage, the situation is in some ways similar. Again perfin collectors look back with nostalgia at the golden days when perfin stamps were regarded as damaged goods and could be obtained for a few copper coins. The growth in the number of perfin collectors has been less dramatic than that for revenues but progressively societies have emerged in many countries devoted to this field. Many are motivated with a desire to describe the background to the perfins. The aim is to provide a comprehensive guide to allow perfin stamps to be listed, usually arranged alphabetically by the initials incorporated in the perfin design with additional categories for those who employed symbols or numbers. Listings of this kind are essential to foster wider collecting interest and progressively a market forms that reflect the rarity or otherwise of individual designs.

For Australia the first comprehensive guide to private perfins was the *Commercial Perfins of Australia* by Grant and Mathews (1992). This was associated with the activities of the Perfin Club of New Zealand with many members contributing to the growing list and background information to Australian perfins. The greatly expanded numbers were then fully described in the *Handbook of Australian Private Perforations* by Mathews (2003). Both of these publications achieved wide acclaim and attained high awards in the Literature Class at National shows. The quarterly Bulletin of the Perfin Club includes updates to the listing of some 500 perfin users listed by Mathews with many users over the years employing different patterns of their perfin. Similar studies have been published by other perfin societies throughout the world. The depth of research required to assemble such information is fully comparable to that employed by philatelists dedicated to other aspects of our hobby.

In addition to perfins, which are by definition perforated prior to use mainly as a security measure, there are pre-printed security, cancelling overprints and related items that acknowledge receipt of payment. A first attempt to list such items for Australia, *Security & Cancelling Overprints of Australia*, was authored by Bryan McGee (2000).

The major difference between the upsurge of interest in revenues and perfins is the opportunity to exhibit the material competitively. To date the FIP has not attempted to provide guidelines to how perfins should be exhibited how they should be judged. There is a possible niche in the relatively new Postal History Class 2c (Historical, Social and Special Studies) but to date few perfin enthusiasts have been brave enough to try this. This is perhaps because the judges are unsure of how to adjudicate such displays or have little prior knowledge of such material especially of the research that is involved. In Australia occasional 1-frame entries based on perfins have been entered into National level exhibitions but again there has been dissatisfaction with some of the awards. This is of course not a new phenomenon for what amount to new class of material. To be fair to National and FIP exhibitions there has been a marked increase in the number of new classes added to exhibition prospectuses over the last couple of decades or so. Our hobby has learned to recognise new fields of endeavour and it would be appropriate if recognition of the progress made by perfin

specialists was rewarded in this way. Although the majority of stamp collectors are happy to beaver away on their chosen area of interest there is little doubt that the opportunity to competitively display their area of chosen expertise would raise the overall status and interest of the subject.

This short background to revenue and especially to perfin collecting is intended to set the scene for the launch on 1 July 2011 of the publication of *Private Revenue Perfins of Australia* by Dave Elsmore and David Coath. The former is well known as a leading exhibitor and author on all aspects of Australian revenues. In addition Dave maintains the website (www.revenuesociety.org.au) for the Revenue based in the UK as well as a much visited web site devoted to Australian revenues (www.ozrevenues.com) and more recently a similar site that focuses on perfins (www.perfins.com.au). In an earlier article in *The Asia Pacific Exhibitor* (Elsmore, 2010) Dave drew attention to the potential of the private revenue perfin field as a collecting area of interest and challenge! David Coath is a life long collector of Australian perfins and is currently President of the Perfin Club of Australia and New Zealand. They claim, I am sure quite rightly, a combined total of 80 years of philatelic study much of which has been devoted to revenues and/or perfins.

The publication is unusual in several respects. Among these are:

- the publication is web based;
- it includes a unique Australian x'PERFIN FINDER'. **{HANS CAN WE ADD `a c in circle' TO INDICATE COPYRIGHT where the `x' is?}**

This new publication extends the available information available in earlier Australian publications which are primarily concerned with perfins used for postage. There is however overlap as many commercial organisations used the same perforators on postage stamps used to send out mail and on revenue stamps used to pay a range of government fees and charges. It should be noted however that the listings by Mathews (2003) and associated updates indicate perfin patterns used postage stamps that were also used on revenue stamps. Elsmore and Coath include perforators used for postage and revenue stamps but also list those restricted to revenue use.

The Nature of the Publication

The details of price and how to purchase the publication and the associated PERFIN FINDER are given at the end of this review. What the purchaser gets is password protected access to what will eventually be a listing of all known private revenue perfins for Australia. The initial listing currently available is complete only for Queensland but the web access will enable the purchaser to have access to the listing for all States as the study progresses. It is hoped that the listings for Western Australia and Tasmania will be available by December 2011

Helpfully the current listing does contain some preliminary information for States other than Queensland. This is pertinent as many firms had offices in several States, eg. major insurance companies. In such cases the abbreviations of the company name (or sometimes its logo) is the same or similar regardless of location. The inclusion of this material will also assist contributors who wish to add to the date base.

The greatest gain of a web based listing is the opportunity for continuous updating as new information becomes available. Internet users can clearly print off their own hard copy but the authors, who are also the publishers, will print off and post a hard copy to purchasers who do not have internet access.

The authors stress that they strongly encourage collectors of perfins that include revenue use to send in copies of their collections or corrections and additions to available listing.

The PERFIN FINDER

Perfin patterns are produced by puncturing the stamps with a perforator and on occasion replacement perforators use the same pattern but with differing pin spacing and size. These small differences can be a source of confusion but purchasers of the publication package are provided with a series of transparent plastic sheets that reproduce, true to scale, the pattern of all known Queensland perfin patterns. Checking a perfin, on or off document, with the Perfin Finder enables the user to easily identify the correct pattern. The authors are to be congratulated in developing such a simple and effective device. Figure 1 shows part of one of the transparent sheets overlain on a document. In this example it is the perfin NZ/IC (New Zealand Insurance Company) for which seven different perfins are described in the accompanying text.

Figure 1. The PERFIN Finder for NZ/IC overlain on a document with NZ/IC.f

FIG 1 About here - Hans already has this illustration.

The Text

Information regarding perfin patterns includes the:

- pattern of the perforator
- type of perforator;
- organisation using the perforator;
- stamps on which perfins are found;
- periods of use .

Figure 2 An example of the entry for perfin BP.d

Hans: Fig 2 about here. If it helps the entry could be `boxed' or inset.



User: Burns Philip and Company Ltd

Shipping

Address: 133 Mary St, Brisbane, QLD

Revenue Usage: Numeral 1926 series 2d, 3d, 1/-, 2/-, 5/-

Rarity Scale: 2d R2, 3d R2, 1/- R2, 2/- R4, 5/- R4.

Background: James Burns arrived in Australia from Scotland in 1862 and after being involved in his brother's retail business in Brisbane he moved to Townsville and established his own business (retail/wholesale) in 1872. In 1874 he met another Scottish immigrant, Robert Philip, who he later took as a partner. In 1882 the partnership was converted into a corporation and Burns Philip and Company Ltd was formed. Burns Philip's interests expanded to include coastal trading and shipping, around Australia and into much of the South Pacific.

This device was located in Cairns where Burns Philip had offices at the wharfs (and possibly in Cairns proper). It is a single head device quite similar to the BP.b and BP.d devices that were used in the Burns Philip Brisbane office.

The Cairns office of Burns Philip was known to have applied to use a perforating device in June 1918. This application was most likely for a very short lived BP device (BP.7 HAPP) which is not reported used on revenue stamps. This approval then seems to have been applied to the use of this BP.a device and the later BP.c devices used in Cairns.

Device: Most likely a single head device. As with BP.b (Brisbane), the punch head of the device was set up on an angle of about 15-20 degrees from the horizontal. This means that you will find many patterns at a variety of angles across the stamp.

Most likely this device replaced BP.b in about 1947.

The pattern is also found on postage stamps.

Related Patterns:

Refer to other Burns Philip Company patterns.

Qld: BP.a BP.b BP.c□

NSW: BP.a

All of these aspects are described in the publication with each perfin accompanied by the perfin pattern with a reference number, an example of use on a stamp and on occasion also an illustration of use on document. As the material is web based these are in colour. There is guidance to the type of perforator, eg. single or multi-head etc. The name and address of the organisation is given together with detailed accounts to the type of business. These are accompanied by references to the source of information and in some cases illustrated by photographs such as the business premises or the owners. A listing of the revenue stamps on which the perfin is known to have been used is also given which gives an indication of the period of use.

The perfin patterns are listed from A to Z but with an additional 'Other' Class. This includes security overprinted stamps and others overprinted for receipt purposes. Some will argue that these are not strictly perfins but their inclusion is welcome as it enhances overall interest in the study. Figure 3 is an example of a security overprint.

HANS Figure 3. T & G Life Society – an example of a security overprint. **I suspect that there may not will not be room for this. If so delete the ref to Fig 3 above.**



Figure 3. T & G Life Society – an example of a security overprint.

Summary

An innovative publication which opens up a new collecting area and provides an opportunity for those with material of this kind to contribute to the listing. Early purchase is recommended for all those interested in Australian and Australian States revenues and perfins. The listings in the publication are accompanied by full background descriptions to both the perfins revenue aspects of this exciting and challenging new field.

References

- Elsmore D (2010) Private revenue perfins of Australia. *The Asia Pacific Exhibitor*, 23 (1), pp 40-42.
- Grant, J & Mathews, J (1992). *Commercial Perfins of Australia*.
- Magee, B (2000). *Security & Cancellng Overprints of Australia*.
- Mathews, J (2003). *Handbook of Australian Private Perfins*.

How to Purchase?

Access to the current publication and to subsequent updates plus the Perfin Finder transparent sheets for all the Queensland perfin so far described, is available at a cost of \$65.00. For members of the Perfin Club of New Zealand and Australia the cost is reduced to \$55.00. NOTE this reduction is the equivalent of a year's subscription! This also includes the cost of postage within Australia, for overseas mail charges at cost are extra. Payment is by cash cheque or PayPal (with 3% charge to cover fees etc). Orders and inquiries by email to either Dave Elsmore (dave1@bigpond.net.au) or David Coath (davidcoath@onthenet.net.au) or by post to D. Elsmore, PO Box 66, Springwood, Queensland 4127.

The Perfin Club of New Zealand & Australia

The Club publishes the *South Pacific Bulletin* on a quarterly basis as well as offering a long running series of Postal Auction devoted to perfin material and circulating packets of perfin material within Australia and New Zealand. The subscription is \$A10 for addresses in Australia and New Zealand, for residents elsewhere the Bulletin is sent air mail for an annual subscription of \$A15. This must rank as one of the best value philatelic subscriptions that I know! Contacts are either David Coath (President) on davidcoath@onthe.net/au or John Mathews (Secretary) on john.mathews@canberra.edu.au