

Introduction

The purpose of this Introduction is to provide an overview of the different types of perfin patterns found on the stamps of Australia.

Furthermore it will layout the conventions and rules that the authors have used when building the Catalogue listing.

It may come as a surprise to readers but all previous studies of Australian Private Perfins have been published without any clear conventions and rules for building the catalogue. These may have existed in the minds of the Catalogue Editors but they have not been explained to the collectors and neither have they been employed consistently.

The different types of Australian Private Perfins

In the collecting of Australian Private perfins there are 2 basic types of perfins, as follows:

- 1 Customised perfins
- 2 Temporary perfins

Customised perfins in Brief

These perfins are formed by a “custom built” (hence customised) device that produces a specific pattern. These Customised patterns are easily the most common forms of private perfins found in Australia and indeed the world.

They include the patterns of the largest Private Perfin users such as David Jones, D&J Fowler, Howard Smith, Vacuum Oil, major Insurance companies, and many others.

These Customised patterns are struck from purpose built devices, sometimes with multiple dies and the devices tend to be of a high quality and are therefore in service for an extended period of time. Over there period of use they generally produce consistent patterns and this makes these perfin patterns more common. These Customised devices have been in service from the 1880's until the 1970's when Private perfin use ceased in Australia.

Customised patterns represent only about 20% of the Private perfin patterns currently reported on the postage and revenue stamps of Australia and its previous Colonies and yet due to their more common nature they would account for approximately 90% of the Private perfin patterns in circulation.

Temporary Perfins in Brief

These Temporary perfins are formed by dies on special variable devices that can be set up to make a given perfin pattern on a given day.

These devices were generally used by Stamp vendors who used them to apply perfins to stamps as a value added service to customers purchasing stamps. As a result of this practise in the first published study of Australian private perfins, “Commercial Perfins of Australia” (Grant/Mathews 1992), these Temporary perfins were dubbed “Service Punctures” and more specifically because most of these patterns emanated from Melbourne, Victoria, they were collectively called “Victorian Service Punctures” or VSP’s. This is not entirely correct as a small number of Temporary patterns are from devices located in Sydney albeit with a different structure.

The customers of these stamp vendors tended to be smaller companies and therefore the instance of the Temporary perfins is less common than that of Customised perfins.

Customised perfins in Detail

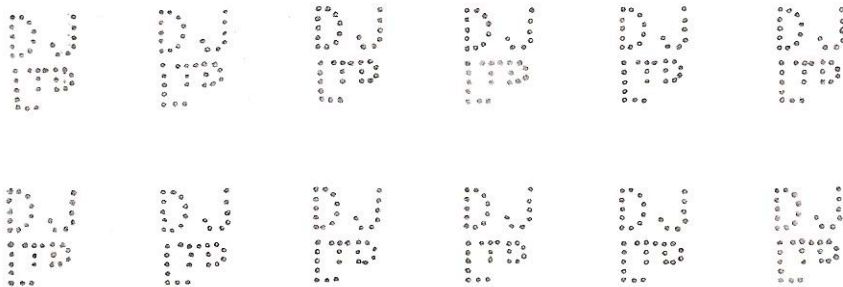
As stated these Customised patterns are the most common patterns that you will see and they are called “Customised” because they are made by strikes of a device that has been “custom made” to produce a specific pattern.

These devices were expensive, particularly the multi die devices, and therefore a company that purchased one would generally be a larger company with high mail and parcel volumes, and therefore Customised patterns tend to be more common.

Customised patterns will generally be consistent over the life span of the device, but they may be subject to variation for different reasons, as follows:

a/ They are different dies of a Multi die device in which the dies are slightly different.

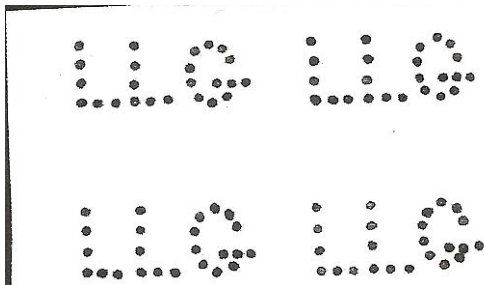
An example of this is the pattern DJLTD.2 which is a 12 die device in a 2 (high) x 6 (wide) format as follows:



DJLTD.2 presents a cataloguing problem as some of the variation in some of the dies could be considered to be sufficient to allow a separate pattern to be listed. However it would be difficult to categorise and list 12 different patterns as many of the dies are so close in appearance.

The best compromise is to show all the dies and their separation but to list it as a single pattern.

A clearer example of different dies in a multi die device is the large LLG 4 die device in a 2 (high) x 2 (wide) format as follows:

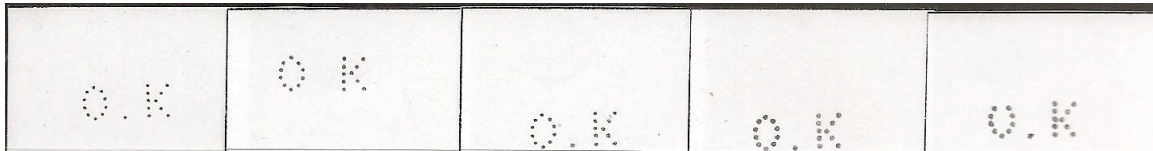


In this case the 4 dies are more distinctly different and so they can be catalogued as 4 separate patterns, but once again there is a need to show the relationship of the 4 dies and although listed as four patterns these are listed collectively as LLG.a, LLG.b, LLG.c and LLG.d.

b/ The pattern is altered due to repair or refurbishment of the device.

Such variation can be harder to detect, in which case it can go unreported or as has happened in the earlier studies of Private Perfins in Australia it has been mistakenly listed as a series of different patterns.

A good example of this is the OK patterns used in South Australia over the period 1894 - 1970



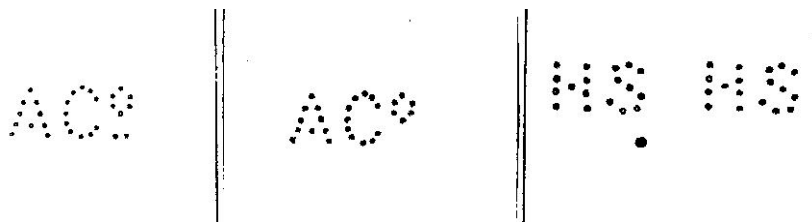
OK.a

1894-1920	1920-1924	1924 -1925	1925-1927	1928-1970
Original die	Centre pin lost	1 st Repair Centre pin	2nd Repair Thicker pins	Top pin of O lost

In this instance we would list the principal pattern and then show the variation that had occurred over time.

c/ The device could become worn or damaged and this could lead to the lose of pins or inconsistent strikes.

Such variation can be corrected by a repair to the device as was the case with the OK device (see type b/) but in other instances the variation continues over time. As with the variation in type b/ this can lead to misreporting of the variation as a different pattern ach has bee the case with ACO and HS.



In this instance we would list the principal pattern and then show the variation that had occurred with missing or dropped pins.

Temporary perfins in Detail

These perfin patterns are generally less common than “customised” patterns. They are called “Temporary” patterns because they are made up as a temporary setting on a perfin device which can be altered to produce a range of perfin patterns.

The devices that created these Temporary patterns were generally owned by Stamp Vendors who were licensed by the Post Office to sell postage and revenue stamps and most likely added a customer's Company initials, or in some instances a logo, as a valued added service.

The purchase of stamps with Temporary perfin patterns was attractive to smaller companies as it did not require the company to purchase a dedicated perfin device. Accordingly these Temporary patterns are often used by smaller companies with lower postage usage and this contributes to them being less common.

Some larger companies such as the retailer Robert Reid, used Temporary patterns even during times that they had their own dedicated Customised device.

Because the creation of the Temporary pattern was a setting on a device made up on a single day, the patterns, even when depicting the same letter combination could vary from batch to batch.