

# INDIAN DATESTAMPS MANUFACTURED IN THE UK

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At our October London meeting the President, Cliff Gregory, showed a copy of a page full of date stamp impressions which he had just obtained from the British Postal Museum and Archive in London, which included two proofs of slightly different BOMBAY duplexes dated Sept. 1865, both with code A. I made the comment that Colonel Martin had discovered the same record and other similar items as long ago as 1969, and had briefly reported them in *India Post*; also that I now had his photographic copy of the page and my own subsequent unpublished research notes on the subject.

Cliff Gregory's copy has now been illustrated in the latest *India Post* 169 (November 2007), on the inside back cover, together with an actual example dated 29 JA. 66. The original reference was *India Post* 14 (March 1969), pages 28-29, where Horsman produced some of his renowned idealised tracings to accompany Col. Martin's notes, and a cover from Gilbert Danby also with code A, apparently dated MA. 28 / 65 — which was later thought to be a misreading for 1866. Horsman noticed that despite the appearance of being duplex, the spacing suggested that the two halves had been struck separately in the proof book. The relevance of this observation will emerge below.



*Trace by Gog Horsman of the two proof impressions. Note the variable spacing between the two parts of each*

Colonel Martin had made use of an 'Index to Foreign Entries in the Proof Books' that had been compiled in 1966 by Ralph Group, RPSL. This listed, in addition to the item in volume 15 now reported, items from two much earlier volumes; dated double arc stamps for Calcutta and Aden from 1853 and 1855, in Vol. 8(2) (which need not concern us here). But on a later page of volume 15 there was a LAHORE sin-

gle datestamp, and a similar implement was found in volume 22. These both were proofed in 1864.

I later revived the subject briefly in 'Queries & Answers' in my reply to a query from Max Smith (Q94/25) on the topic of a Calcutta urban duplex without number, similar to Renouf Type 25. In *India Post* 123, Jan. 1995, Mr Oehme told me that he had discovered in his notes that this new type was 'an early machine stamp introduced in Calcutta GPO in 1867 after experiments in Bombay and Calcutta the previous year'. He supplied detailed transcripts from the India Office records, which enabled me to identify the 'machine' as a Pearson Hill Parallel Motion patented design, well-known to collectors of British postal history. Further research ensued, which has been 'pending' on my desk ever since — twelve years is a short time in philately!

Mr. Oehme's transcript is now published for the first time; newer members may not be aware that he was my predecessor as compiler of 'Queries & Answers' from 1976 to 1993, and spent much of his retirement making copious notes on Indian post office history in the East India Company Records at Blackfriars: those records are now in the new British Library.

He gives the reference as 'File 1866 Range 434 Vol.39': Letter from E. P. Hill Esq. dated London 14 October 1865 to E. C. Bayley, Sec. to Govt. of India:

I beg leave to send for your information the annexed copy of a circular letter which has been issued by this Dept. to the Post Office Surveyors of the U.K. regarding the introduction of Stamping Machines and it is possible you may be pleased to use a similar machine in your postal service.



machines are worked by hand, they are small and portable, and stand when in use on the ordinary stamping table. They can be used either with a single date stamp or with the double stamp which impresses the date and cancels the postage label at the same time. The following statement... shows the speed at which the machine can be worked continuously after a little practice [tables omitted here] Average per hour 10,372, per minute 173.

From: H. B. Riddell, Director General of Posts in India, letter no. 115 dated Simla 8 May 1866, to E. C. Bayley, Secy. to Govt. of India.

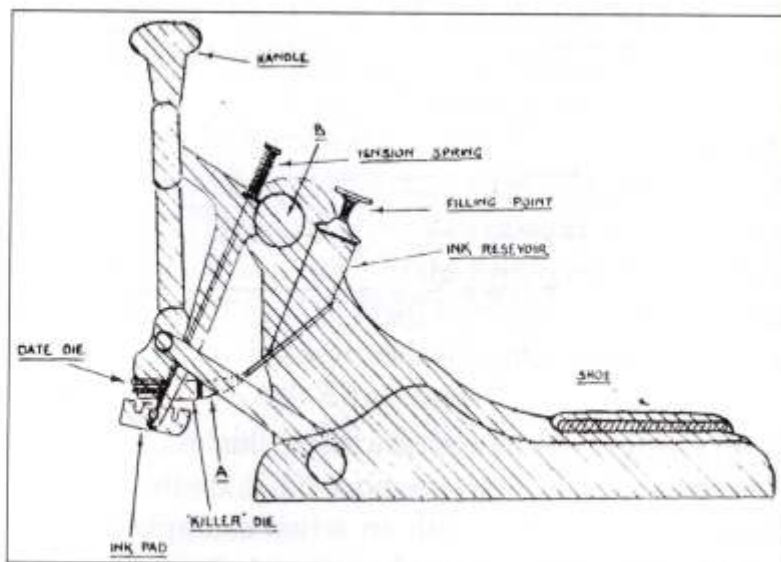
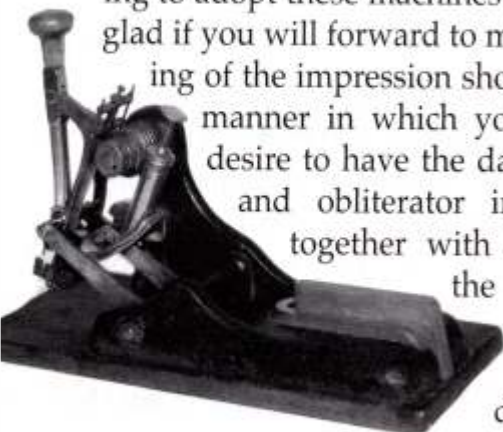
I have the honour to submit an indent for a small number of the letter stamping machines described in the enclosed circular from the Secretary to the GPO. London.

The machines have been tried at Bombay and Calcutta; there is not much gain in the point of speed, but the impressions made by the machine are clearer than those made by hand. I fear there will be difficult in repairing the machines when out of order, and, therefore, that their use had better for the present be confined to a few of the largest post offices.

Cost of complete machine with dies, type, and packed for transmission abroad is 12. In the event of your desiring to adopt these machines I shall be glad if you will forward to me a drawing

of the impression showing the manner in which you would desire to have the date stamp and obliterator impressed together with a list of

the types required for each die.



*The Pearson Hill 'Parallel Motion' machine, as drawn by Stitt Dibden and reproduced in 'Stamp Collecting', 1st December 1961, and below an image from the British Postal Museum*

Mr. Oehme continued with what appears to be his own summary of the contents of the circular referred to:

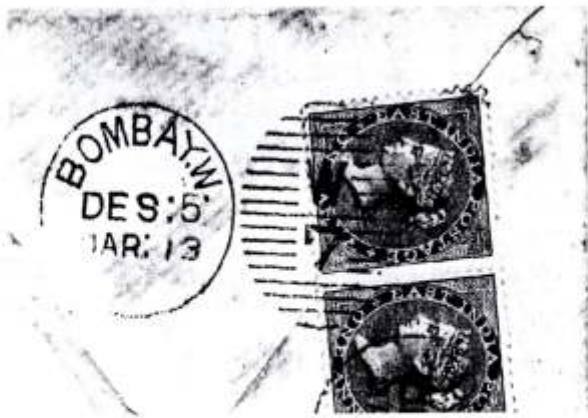
In enclosed, these machines used a single stamp during the morning period and a double stamp during the evening period. In Bombay and Calcutta these machine stamps appear to be in double or combined form with date stamp and a local town P.O. number and/or initials, such as 1-SE, E.C/1, etc.



*The first Pearson machine was numbered '3', and marks bore the code letters 'A' and 'B'. It was introduced into service in May 1858.*

In a following letter Ernest Oehme commented that in his opinion these obliterations were Renouf/Martin type 25 for Calcutta, which he called the 'Chinese lantern' type - as in Query 94/25 mentioned above -





*'Chinese lantern type' as used in Bombay. The cds has no year date and has been dated to 1876. Resembles Renouf Type 22b.*

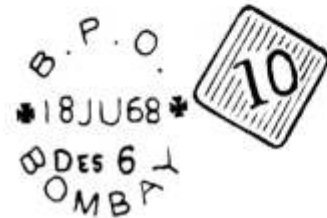
with letters such as N, C, S, SE, NE, etc., and type 22a for Bombay, although the former were only known in our records as used from 1871, and the Bombay type from 1868. He also thought that Calcutta adapted the machines to use square barred obliterations (types 17e and f) such as 1=S used at Loudon Street and 1=EC at Napit Bazar. However the letter stated that experimental use had taken place prior to May 1866. Obviously the dies used in Bombay were the two slightly differing in detail found in the proof books, but none for Calcutta appear to have been proofed in London.

There is an anomaly of date in that the Circular went from London on 14 October 1866, but the Bombay proof impressions contain the dates 15 Sep. and 23 Sep. respectively: however items on the same sheet are dated as far back as January 1864 and the volume was obviously compiled retrospectively in alphabetical order from cut-out proofs taken earlier. Either the date in the proofs is not correct, or the dies were made in anticipation of an order — to show the potential of the machine.

The first quoted letter by 'E. P. Hill' is from the Secretary's Office in London GPO. Sir Rowland Hill of 'Penny Black' fame had just retired as Secretary, and the writer is almost certainly his son Pearson Hill (1832-1898), though he did not use the extra initial E. Pearson trained as an engineer but then made a career in the Post Office, working in the Secretary's office under his father. From 1857 onward he designed a series of experimental machines on a lever system which inked the die between each impression and could be applied accurately and rapidly over the ad-

hesive stamp. There can be little doubt that Pearson Hill was writing to India - and perhaps to other Empire PMGs - to promote sales through the Post Office of his invention. His patent rights were purchased by the Post Office in 1867.

In July 1865 the new Secretary John Tilley sent a Circular offering the machines to all the UK Surveyors - who had charge of the districts; this is what was sent to India in October.



*Col. Martin's type 4n, as used in Bombay, 1868, from his own trace. Note the dies lie at an angle to each other.*

The method of fixing the dies in place made it possible for them to lie at an angle to each other and with variable spacing. It was also possible to work with only the dater attached, for stamping incoming mail. The machines were made by Turner & Co., a sub-contractor of Simpson & Co, and they also made all the dies until 1874. The first were placed in regular service in the Inland Office in 1860 and by 1864 they were also in the London District offices. The full story was told by W. G. Stitt Dibden in a serial in the weekly 'Stamp Collecting' between 1 December 1961 and 5 January 1962 (see illustrations opposite).

It remains to identify all the dies used in India in the machines, which were after the initial order not necessarily made in London. A clue is the variable angle and distance between the halves, and type 4n is a good candidate - compare Martin's illustration with Renouf's. Also it is known that dies very similar to the 'Chinese lantern' were used in one of the earliest machines in London from 1858 onward.

I leave it to members with collections of Bombay and Calcutta material to take up the search. The single Lahore datestamps in other volumes, proofed on JU.19/64 (code C) and OC.22/64 (code A), in designs commonly found in India, do not at present fit into the story.