

Swedish Per(f)plexities

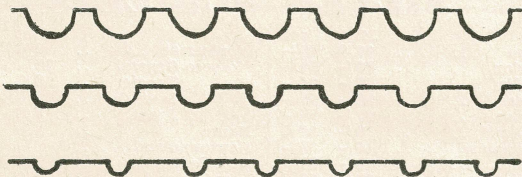
By MISS L. E. GRIFFITHS

THE production of postage stamps in Sweden generally can be divided into three main periods—from 1855 to 1919, 1920 to 1937, and 1938 to date. During the first period (1855-1919), the printing of the stamps was undertaken by private firms, but since then stamp production has been in the hands of the Postal Administration's own printing department. The first printing and ancillary plant installed by the Printing Department was made by the American firm of B. R. Stickney and came into use in 1920. The second period (1920-1937) covers the time the Stickney press was in use, but after the production of some 6,000,000,000 stamps, it was more or less worn out, and a new press required. A German machine was purchased—from the firm of Goebel A.G.—and the first stamps produced thereon were issued in 1938. This machine is still in use, and this therefore can be regarded as the third period—1938 to date. (It is understood that a third rotary printing press, similar to the Goebel but built in Switzerland, is now being installed by the Printing Department, so that the near future will see the commencement of a fourth period.)

For the sake of convenience and to retain the proper perspective, these brief notes on Swedish perforations are therefore based on these three periods.

Period I—1855-1919

This first period can be sub-divided into two sections, covering perforations gauging 14 and 13. From 1855 to 1877 three perforating machines were used, all gauging 14, but with care it is possible to distinguish between them as the first, in use from 1855 to mid-1865, had perforating pins of 1.2 mm. diameter, while on the second the pins were 1 mm. The third machine which came into use in March, 1872, had even smaller diameter pins, namely 0.9 mm. The effect of these different diameter perforations can be seen on individual stamps in the "teeth", the first being long and fairly pointed, the second shorter and more blunt, and the third shorter still and even more blunt.

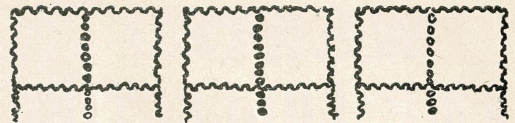


It can be mentioned that there do exist imperforate copies of some values in this first division, but the numbers are very small—in the skilling-banco issues only some eight to ten copies in all are known. These are not to be confused with the imperforate proofs of the skilling-banco reprints.

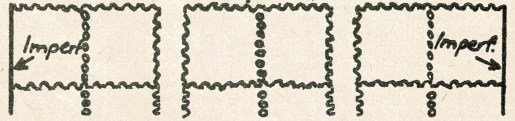
It is certain that more than one perforating machine must have been used in the second part of this period (between 1877 and 1919), but if there was more than one between 1877 and 1910, there are no discernible differences in the perforations themselves which all gauge 13. There were three machines in use between 1910 and 1919 giving perforations gauging 13 and $13 \times 13\frac{1}{2}$. The result is that some values of the King Gustav issues of this period exist in both perf. 13 and perf. $13 \times 13\frac{1}{2}$, but it is not particularly easy to distinguish between them, unless in blocks.

Imperforate copies exist of most values in this section, these being printer's proofs which are mainly scarce to rare except for one or two values.

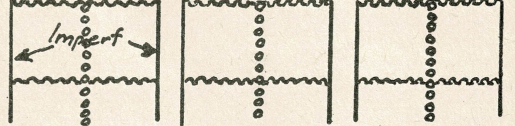
Period I—King Gustav issues (with 2 exceptions) Period II



Period III—until 1940



Period III—from 1940



Booklet stamp perms.—applicable to definite issues and similar size commemoratives.

Period II—1920-1937

In this period, there are three main divisions, (a) imperf. $\times 10$ (actually $9\frac{1}{2}$), (b) perf. 10 (actually $9\frac{1}{2}$), and (c) imperf. $\times 13$. With the introduction of the rotary press, the stamps were printed in a continuous web, and instead of sheets, Sweden adopted the coil generally as a more convenient form for distribution.

After printing and gumming, therefore, the stamps were perforated across the web in a rotary machine, the perforations gauging 10, after which they were passed through a coiling machine which cut the web lengthwise and coiled the separate strips into predetermined lengths of 100, 500 and 1,000 stamps. These are the coil stamps of division (a) imperf. $\times 10$, and as they include all but one (1931—Stockholm Royal Palace), value of the definite issues and most of the commemorative issues, this is the most common perf. combination of this period.

Turning now to the second division (b), the stamp web after printing and gumming, was passed through the same rotary perforating machine, to which additional perforating wheels were added to perforate the stamps on all four sides. After checking, the web was divided by hand into sheets, and from these sheets the booklets were made, the stamps being divided into double strips and wire stitched into the covers by hand. Generally, only the lower values (i.e. up to 20 o.) were made up into booklets, each booklet containing stamps of one denomination, except the King Gustaf 70th Birthday issue, these latter booklets containing eight each of the 5, 10 and 15 o. values.

A few low values of the definite issues were distributed in sheets in addition to coils, these including the first type of the 5 o. green in the Lion design (S.G.97a) and the 10 and 20 o. values of the King Gustaf full-face design (S.G.103a and 105a); and of the commemorative issues, the two 1924 U.P.U. issues (which were only issued in sheets) and the King Gustaf 70th Birthday set (issued in sheets and booklets but not coils).

These booklets and sheets are the division (b) perf. 10 stamps, and incidentally it is not possible to distinguish between them unless in horizontal strips of three (or blocks of six, etc.) which would mean that these were from sheets.

(This article will shortly be concluded, and readers are advised to retain the first instalment, as the diagram refers to both parts.)



Same perf.: different size holes.

The last division in this period, (c), covers a second type of coil stamp imperf. $\times 13$. These were for use in the automatic vending machines and were produced in exactly the same way as the other coil stamps except that a different perforating machine was used which was built especially for this purpose. Only the lower denominations were required for these automatic machines and therefore this combination (imperf. $\times 13$) will only be found in the 5 and 10 o. values of the 1920 Lion type and the 1933 Postal Savings Bank 5 o.

Sometimes these vending machines did not function correctly, with the result that occasionally the teeth which should grip the stamp strip at the perforations, actually gripped the stamp itself. Consequently the purchaser when taking the stamp from the machine, obtained two half stamps with the perforation between.

Period III—1938 to date

In this final period there are two main sections to consider—coils and booklets. The coils are quite straightforward, being produced on the Goebel machine (which came into use at the beginning of this period) with its built-in perforator gauging $12\frac{1}{2}$. All coil stamps in this period, therefore, are imperf. $\times 12\frac{1}{2}$, with the exception, so far, of the following larger than standard commemorative issues, namely the 1941 St. Bridget, 1943 King Gustaf's 85th Birthday, 1947 40th year of the King's reign, and 1949 Lingiaden, which are perf. $12\frac{1}{2} \times$ imperf.

The booklets in the first part of this period, i.e. until 1940, were still made up by hand. The printing and perforating were carried out on the Goebel machine, the necessary combs being added to the perforator in such a way as to omit the perforations after each twelfth row of stamps on the web. The web was then fed into a rotary cutter which cut the web after each twelfth row of stamps, thus making sheets with the outside vertical rows of stamps having one side imperforate. The booklets were made up by hand from these sheets, and with two rows of stamps in a booklet, this meant that one booklet in three, on the average, had either the left-hand or right-hand row of stamps with one side imperforate and the remaining sides perf. $12\frac{1}{2}$. The booklets made from the centre of the sheets had stamps perf. $12\frac{1}{2}$ on all four sides.

Swedish Per(f)plexities

By MISS L. E. GRIFFITHS

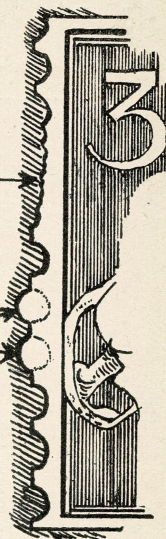
(Continued from page 433)

There is one point which should be mentioned in connection with the coil stamps and the booklets and sheets, and that is that the perforations are often very ragged or rough owing to the wear and/or breaking of the perforating pins, and to the paper tearing by reason of the coarseness of the perforation.

Probably this imperfection led either to the renewal of the pins or the installation of a new perforating machine during this period, for the later perforations, while still gauging 10, produced holes of a slightly smaller diameter. It is necessary to have pairs for comparison.

Broken
Pins

Worn
Pins



With the growing demand for booklets, it was decided to instal a special machine for making them automatically, and in 1940 such a machine was purchased from Goebel A.G.

The stamps are printed (on pre-gummed paper) and perforated on the main machine, but the printing of the cover paper, assembling of the booklets, final folding and shearing are carried out on the booklet machine which has a production rate of between 4,000 and 5,000 per hour.

For this method of production the stamps are perforated on three sides and imperf. on the fourth. In each pair of stamps, therefore, the left-hand stamp is imperf. on the left and the right-hand stamp imperf. on the right, the remaining sides of each being perforated.

It must be mentioned that while the vertical perf. gauges $12\frac{1}{2}$ as with the coil stamps and the previous booklets, the horizontal perfs. gauge 13.

This arrangement of perforations applies to all the standard size stamps and so far the only exceptions are the larger commemoratives, viz. 1941 St. Bridget, 1943 King Gustaf's 85th Birthday, 1947 40th year of the King's reign, and 1949 Lingiaden, which are imperf. at top or bottom and perf. on remaining sides; and the 1942 Elementary Schools which is imperf. on both sides and perf. top and bottom. As previously, only the lower denominations come in booklets.

Before concluding, it must be mentioned that some stamps in this period have been issued in sheets, these being the 1941 Stockholm Royal Palace and the 1942 Flying Swans (both also in hand-made booklets), neither of which have been issued in coils; and finally the 5, 10 and 15 o. values in the design of the current King Gustaf definite issue. These latter were printed in 1939-40 and stored against the emergency of damage to the printing plant during the war years, and were only issued on July 25th, 1946.

The information contained in this article has been passed as accurate by STAMP COLLECTING's Swedish correspondent. He has been good enough to check the writer's notes and his assistance is very much appreciated.

WANTED

FRANK GODDEN, LTD.

110-111 STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2

RARE STAMPS

of any COUNTRY

Tel.: Temple Bar 4711 (2 lines)

Cables: "Albums, London"