

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE MAIN BRITISH STAMP PRINTERS**

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#### **PAST PRINTERS**

**Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. Ltd.** In 1856 Henry Bradbury formed a company with his partner and engraver, Robert Wilkinson and executed a banknote order for Montevideo in 1858. In 1871, the firm made its first engraving for stamps preparing plates for the state of Hyderabad and in 1878 engraved and printed the first Falkland Islands stamps. 1918 saw production of the British 'Seahorses' high values and they intermittently printed recess high values until the 1970s.

The company moved from London to a site in New Malden, later becoming a subsidiary of American Bank Note Company. In 1986 ABNC sold 'Brads' to DLR, who absorbed them by 1990.

**Harrison & Sons Ltd.** Company origins can be traced back to Richard Harrison who, in the mid-1500s, was recorded as a Freeman of 'the mystery and art of printing'. The company was founded by James Harrison in London in 1750 and the company logo changed over the years, but invariably retained the hare, rye and sun rebus.

Harrison once produced stamps for over 100 countries and its first British contract was in 1881 producing one-shilling embossed stamps for telegram forms, followed by a major contract in 1911 for definitives and from 1934 until the 1980s virtually every British stamp came from Harrison's.

In 1997, DLR purchased Harrison and almost overnight centuries of tradition were swept away when the company changed its name to De La Rue Security Print. Machin definitives continued to use the Harrison imprint due to the expense of changing cylinders, but gradually changed over to a DLR imprint from late 1998.

**House of Questa Ltd.** In 1966, Questa began with a single colour Heidelberg litho press. Quality and reliability soon became by-words and three more Heidelberg's were purchased.

The company's introduction to stamps apparently came by chance, and having completed that first contract (for Trinidad & Tobago), many other countries became regular customers. In 1969, Questa expanded into a new custom-designed factory complex and in 1980 the first stamp contracts for Britain were secured - the 2p, 5p and 75p definitives and Sports commemoratives.

In 1984 Waddington acquired Questa and withdrew from printing stamps under its own name. 1996 witnessed the sale of Questa to MDC Canada (who also owned Ashton Potter) and a move to new premises in Byfleet was followed by DLRs acquisition and closure of Questa in 2002.

**Perkins, Bacon & Co. [Ltd. in 1887].** An unfortunate incident in 1861 when one of its owners gave away sets of specially cancelled stamps to influential friends without permission of the governments concerned caused a sensation. It resulted in the loss of around two-thirds of stamp production business and they were forced to fill this spare capacity with less prestigious commercial printing.

In 1935 they went into liquidation and were acquired by WW Sprague. 1936 saw the sale of remaining stamp stock to stamp dealers and the donation of production records to the Royal Philatelic Society. There was another take-over in 1965 by the MB Group, itself absorbed into DLR in 1993.

**Perkins, Bacon & Petch.** Founded in 1819, it had four different trading names before becoming Perkins, Bacon & Petch in 1834 and was the leading printer of its day, producing 'inimitable banknotes'. In 1840 it printed the Penny Black and the only surviving printing press used is on display daily at the British Library. The company reformed in 1852 as Perkins, Bacon & Co.

**John Waddington of Kirkstall Ltd.** The first stamp fully produced by Waddington's was in 1967 for St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla. Previously renowned for posters and quality commercial print, they soon gained a fine reputation in the field of stamps. They had supplied many of the artwork designs for Format and also acted as sub-contractors to them and DLR before producing stamps in their entirety. The first British contract was for 4p definitives in 1980, but they ceased stamp production upon acquisition of Questa.

**Waterlow & Sons Ltd.** Founded in 1810 as sellers of legal documents, Waterlow's first stamps appeared in the early 1850s with a lithographed issue for British Guiana and 1913 saw their first British contract. In 1952 they celebrated a century of stamp production, but within eight years had been absorbed into DLR.

**Waterlow Brothers & Layton.** This company was formed in 1877 following a Waterlow family dispute and it was not until 1920 that the rift was healed enabling a merger with Waterlow & Sons, ending decades of intense rivalry and competition. In 1911 the 'Seahorses' high value stamps were printed by WL&B (using DLR plates), but in 1915 relinquished the contract to DLR.

### **CURRENT PRINTERS**

**Cartor Security Printing Ltd.** Formed in 1974 and originally based at L'Aigle and since 1999 at La Loupe, it has specialised in the printing of high-quality stamps since its inception. In 1995, Cartor was taken over by Gilles le Baud who provided the structure for future growth and in 2004 it became a key constituent of the newly-formed ISP group, having been bought outright by Walsall.

Its reputation has been based around the continual development and investment in new printing processes and endeavours to react rapidly to the needs and wishes of postal administrations, now also including Royal Mail following its first print job for them in 2005. It is especially known for the additional features applied to its stamps, such as foils and the use of thermography and aromatic inks

**De La Rue Security Print Ltd.** Thomas De La Rue & Co. Ltd. was founded in 1813, with their first stamps appearing in 1853 (revenue) and 1855 (postal – the British 4d

carmine). Group origins lie in the efforts of Thomas to build a business in printing and publishing on Guernsey. He later made his way to London to make his fortune where he dabbled, among other things, in straw hat making.

De La Rue finally made good in printing and amassed a fortune from producing stamps (then in their infancy) and from his patented production of playing cards, much in demand in Victorian England. They held a monopoly on British stamp printing from 1880 to 1911, losing the low value production to Harrison's due to an excessive pricing structure.

This worldwide group is now best known for its banknotes and stamps disappeared from their product portfolio towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following the acquisition of Harrison in 1997, DLR was again in the business of stamp printing. The acquisition of Questa followed in 2002, with relocation of stamp production from High Wycombe to Byfleet. In 2003 DLR announced withdrawal from international stamp printing, closure of Byfleet and transfer of stamp production to Dunstable.

### **Royal Joh. Enschedé Stamps bv.**

Printer Isaac Enschedé founded the company in 1703, making it one of the oldest printing houses in Europe. Family members have been around in varying capacities to this day with the company archivist still an Enschedé.

Security printing commenced in 1796 when they realised that complicated background patterns could be made by using music type. Banknote production followed and stamps depicting King William III were added to their portfolio in the 1860s.

It currently produces stamps for over sixty countries and started printing 8p definitive stamps for Britain in 1979. Enschedé celebrated its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2003 when the Royal prefix was granted.

**Walsall Security Printers Ltd.** The original company, Walsall Lithographic, was founded in 1894 to print catalogues for harness and saddlers businesses and it was the purchase of a German letterpress 'seal' machine in 1913 that indirectly led to the first stamp contract for WSP fifty years later.

In 1963, Tonga had a requirement for stamps embossed on gold foil and DLR recommended Walsall for the job. The next non-Tonga contract came from Sierra Leone for self-adhesive free-form stamps and WSP still specialise in self-adhesive stamps.

Walsall Security Printers Limited was established in 1966 to concentrate on the specialist skills required for stamp printing and by 1969 was producing stamps for the Crown Agents and IGPC. In 1987 WSP was appointed a supplier to Royal Mail and in 1989 produced 14p and 19p definitive stamps for stamp books.

Expansion of this family-owned business continued with the installation of a new photogravure stamp printing press in 1997 and the establishment of ISP\* in 2004.

*\*International Security Printers (ISP) was the idea of Adrian Aspinall, Chairman of WSP, to unite some of the biggest and best names in stamp production, including Walsall, Cartor and Courvoisier, and to link-up with overseas state printers. ISP acts as an umbrella and marketing name facilitating the combining of resources, improvements to collective buying power and the sharing of expertise and technologies, enabling the group to provide a large range of products and services.*