

RA - IT'S A MYSTERY.

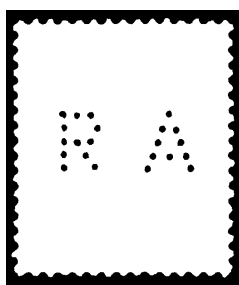
Roy Gault

Why did the Dutch based company 'Philips' use "RA" as their Perfin? This question was asked by *Rosemary Smith* way back in Bulletin N^o. 275 (April 1995), and although both *John Nelson* and *Stephen Steere* responded in subsequent Bulletins, neither proffered an explanation for the use of "RA". The long standing suggestion is that it stands for '*Radio Associates*', but I have my doubts.

To recap, there are *eleven* GB Perfins with the letters "RA" or "R/A", most of which were probably used by the electrical company 'Philips' or its UK subsidiaries. We can reduce the *eleven* to *ten* by excluding "RA" (R0045.04), known used in Cirencester c1904, simply because it's not part of the 1935-1980 group of interest.

Cat No	Letters	Date Range	Comments
R0045.01M	RA	1947-1980	Sloper 12x1 mhd used by 7 users.
R0045.01a	RA	1947-1955	Sloper shd used by 6 users.
R0045.01b	RA	c1960	Sloper shd - user unknown.
R0045.01p	RA	1941-1947	Suspected user - Oxted.
R0045.02	RA	1935-1939	Suspected user.
R0045.03M	RA	1939-1941	Suspected user - Oxted.
R0045.03a	RA	c1939	No postmark evidence.
R0045.04	RA	c1904	Cirencester
R0060.01	R/A	c1949	London pmk.
R0060.01p	R/A	1941-1947	Suspected user.
R0060.02p	R/A	1941-1947	Three users.

1935-1939



R0045.02

Whatever the reason, it must have applied right from the start, and the earliest use of the "RA" Perfin is c1935 in the shape of issue 'M' stamps and a lone 6d I(BC) with R0045.02. The *suspected* user is '*Philips Lamps Ltd*' based on London WC postmarks.



'Philips & Co' was established in 1891 in Eindhoven (Netherlands) as a private company making electric incandescent lamps (light bulbs). The founders were Gerard Philips (1858-1942) and his father Frederick Philips (1830-1900), who was a merchant banker and provided the finance. The company later became known as *'N V Philips Gloeilampenfabriken'*, where *Gloeilampenfabriken* translates as *'Light Bulb Factory'*. By 1922, when Gerard Philips retired, the company had grown into a world-wide enterprise.

'Philips Lamps Ltd' was created in 1925 as a private company specifically to act as the UK subsidiary for *'N V Philips'*. Originally operating from 60 Wilson Street, London EC2, by March 1926 they had moved to *'Philips House'*, 145 Charing Cross Road, London WC2. Still at this address in 1936, they moved again in June 1939 to a new eight-storey building at the northern end of Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2, called *'Century House'*.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, the main thrust of their manufacturing activity in the UK is reflected in their advertising - it was all about light bulbs, in particular their **'ARGENTA'** gas-filled patent light bulb for domestic use. The image shown here has been taken from a 1927 newspaper advertisement.



Now, let's see if we can shed some light onto the meaning of **"RA"**! Phonetically, the 'A' is silent in **'ARGENTA'**, so the initial sound is an 'R', which together with the last letter, an 'A', gives us **"RA"**. Playing with sounds is not a new concept, for example, the initials of the Standard Oil company in the USA are **'SO'**, which gave rise to the well-known logo **'ESSO'**. *Does anyone have a better suggestion?*

The motivation for the *'Radio Associates'* suggestion was the fact that many of the users listed for **"RA"** (R0045.01M/01a) - see following pages - are associated with radios and related services. However, the companies were not only involved with Radios, but also with Televisions, Electric Shavers, Record Players, Light Bulbs Photographic Flashbulbs, ..., and even Gramophone Records. More than that, the involvement with these products was progressive over time as more and more companies were acquired by the Philips Group.

The seven known/suspected users mentioned earlier are:

- **Philips Lamps Ltd.**

Formed in 1925 to act as a UK subsidiary to manufacture electrical lamps (i.e. light bulbs).



- **Mullard Ltd.**

Originally founded in 1919 in Southfields, London, as the 'Mullard radio Valve Co Ltd', it entered into partnership in 1924 with 'Philips'. 'Philips' later acquired all the shares in 'Mullard' in 1927. A new manufacturing plant was opened in 1929 at Mitcham, Surrey. The production of Cathode Ray Tubes (required for Television sets) started in 1936.



In 1947, 'Philips' re-organised both '*Philips Lamps Ltd*' and '*Mullard Ltd*' as wholly-owned subsidiaries of a new company called '*Philips Electrical Industries Ltd*'.

- **London Carriers Ltd.**

Established 14th February 1927 in Croydon specifically to act as the transport and logistics arm for the UK based companies in the 'Philips' Group.



- **Stella Radio & Television Co.**

The 'Stella' Works was established in London NW1 by the mid 1920's, manufacturing headphones for use with the new fangled 'Wireless', and well as gramophone horns. The company later branched out into manufacturing Radios, Televisions, and Tape Recorders, having become part of 'Philips Electrical' in 1951.



- **Cossor Radio & Television Ltd.**

Originally established in 1859 by Albert Charles Cossor in Clerkenwell, London, as a scientific glassware manufacturer. By the 20th century the company had branched out into making Filament Lamps, and by 1935 Cathode Ray Tubes. In 1958, 'Cossor Radio & Television Ltd' was sold to 'Philips'.



- **Combined Electronic Services Ltd.**

'Amalgamated Electrical Services Ltd' was established c1960 to handle the parts and service operations for the Philips Group brands - Philips, Stella, Cossor, Ada, and Peto Scott. The depot was on the Waddon Factory Estate, Croydon. After the 'Pye Group' was acquired by 'Philips' in 1968, Pye's own 'Radio & Television Services Ltd' was combined with 'AES Ltd' to form 'CES Ltd'.

- **London & Overseas Insurances.**

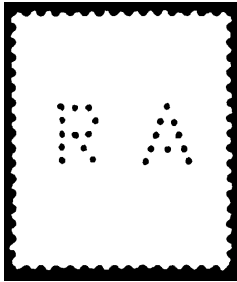
Very little can be discovered about this company, other than it was involved with 'Insurance' in the UK for 'N V Philips'. The company was based in Century House, Shaftesbury Ave, London WC2, previously having been at 'Bonaly', Beadles Lane, Oxted.

This cover, date illegible, (sent in by *Dave Hill*) shows the change-over. The die is "RA" (R0045.01M), in use 1947-1980.



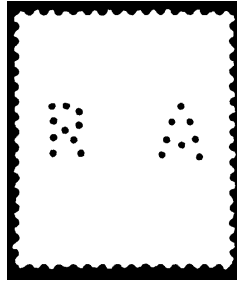
Unfortunately, I have very few examples of any of the ten dies, so rather than embarrass myself, I will only show the silhouettes!

1935-1939



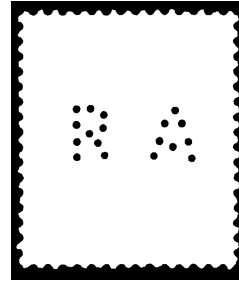
R0045.02

c1939



R0045.03a

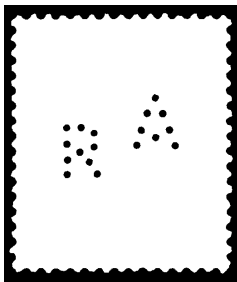
1939-1941



R0045.03M

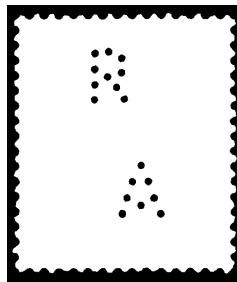
With the destruction of R0045.03M in 1941 “Blitz”, Sloper’s used various SWP versions of either “RA” or “R/A” until 1947, when regular single and multiheaded dies were produced.

1941-1947



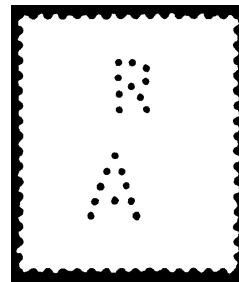
R0045.01p

1941-1947



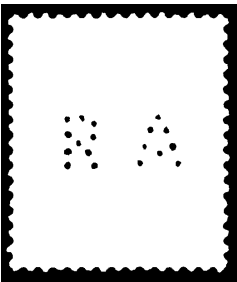
R0060.01p

1941-1947



R0060.02p

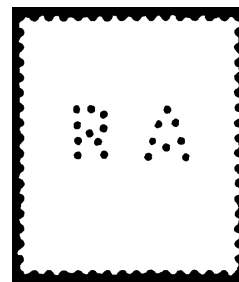
1947-1955



R0045.01a



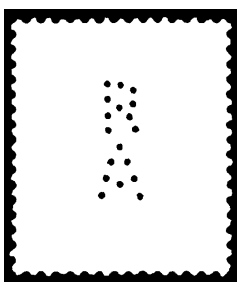
1947-1980



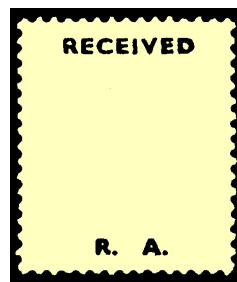
R0045.01M

These last two ‘pop up’ part way through the final sequence.

c1949

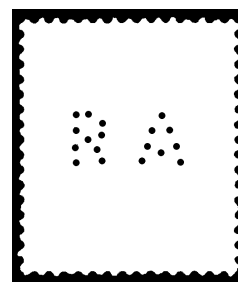


R0060.01



Commercial overprint
shown for reference.

c1960



R0045.01b