

# PERCY LLOYD \* One of the First of the Many



Percy who? Well the name may not yet ring too loud a bell, but James Edward Percy Lloyd ranks as one of Britain's early and more rewarding regional postcard publishers. Pre-dating Wrench among other more familiar pioneers, his composition and superb definition of detail closely resembles "L.L."s collotypes, though here again Lloyd was the earlier publisher. He personally photographed all his production, and his surviving cards include a fine record of the South West Surrey of the Old Queen.

Let's try to clear a little fog and see what we can of him and his techniques, and the way it all began.

Talking of the "Surrey Weekly Press" in July 1926, Lloyd said that he brought the idea back after a visit to Germany. He contacted Frank Lasham, Guildford's leading stationer, "somewhere about 1898". Lloyd was then thirty-three, Post Master and professional photographer, of Church Lane in Albury village five miles away.

"I said to him, as you are my oldest customer I'll give you the opportunity of sharing the idea". Frank promptly replied that picture postcard views "wouldn't go", and despite further persuasion Lloyd couldn't budge him. After a contemplative lunch alone at Bretts, Percy returned to the attack. "Will you do it if I supply you twelve thousand cards and charge you nothing until you've sold them all at 1d. each?" Lasham caved in. Within three months he was asking for all he could get. Percy made him sole agent for Guildford and Lasham got to work on the town's other stationers, supplying them in bulk.

That first twelve thousand comprised a dozen local views including Guildford High Street, St. Nicholas Church, and the Silent Pool at Albury. The earliest 'Lloyds' so far seen by the writer were franked in August 1901; excellent German collotypes filling about half the card. This was still a year before most publishers joined the earlybirds, to be swept into the Golden Age riding high on a deltiological deluge!

Percy Lloyd was born June 15th, 1865 at Upper Street, Shere (the cottage is thought to appear on card no. 1248). It's still one of the prettiest villages between Guildford and Dorking, in the valley of the Tillingbourne beneath the North Downs. His parents, James and Fanny (née Padgett), already had three daughters. As a boy, James was among the first

amateurs to use and make daguerreotypes, introduced in 1839 as the first successful photographic process. The image was reproduced on a metal plate, hence the impossibility of producing duplicate copies as no negative existed. This early interest in the new art was to be taken up by his son.

By 1884 the family had moved to a large house a mile away on the Duke of Northumberland's estate, in Church Lane, Albury. To be re-named "The Studio", it was also to become the Post Office and the base for a considerable postcard publishing business. Young Percy attended the London Polytechnic, and at home was winning prizes with the village Rifle Club. (It was later said that from his studio he could see a fly move at a range of ninety yards on the shutters of Pratt's Stores).

Between 1885-88 Percy's father became Post Master and opened an office at the house, Percy delivering Albury's first telegram, addressed to the Duke. He took over the Post Office from his father in 1892-3, James having become licensee of the Percy Arms at nearby Chilworth.

By about this time they had developed between them a useful photographic business, with the usual private commissions and also production of local views as "scraps" for albums. A first-floor North studio was established, and a garden studio which Percy preferred. He used 12" x 10" and 10" x 8" plate cameras, involving the tricky wet collodion process and long exposure times. At ease in any company, and a good conversationalist, he was very much the entrepreneurial Victorian, and careful with money. On June 8th, 1895 at Albury he married Elizabeth (Lily) Neal of nearby Shalford. After a wedding breakfast at the Percy Arms they honeymooned in Jersey.

And so back to that fruitful little chat with Frank Lasham "somewhere about 1898". Percy had found a German printer of very good quality collotypes, in which the grainy image of half-tone screen work was avoided. Germany was then unbeatable in this process which reproduced delicate detail, though quality could be uneven on long print runs. A few of Lloyd's cards suffered in this respect, when perfect tonal balance in a given batch steadily deteriorated through over-inking, due to partial drying of the gelatine

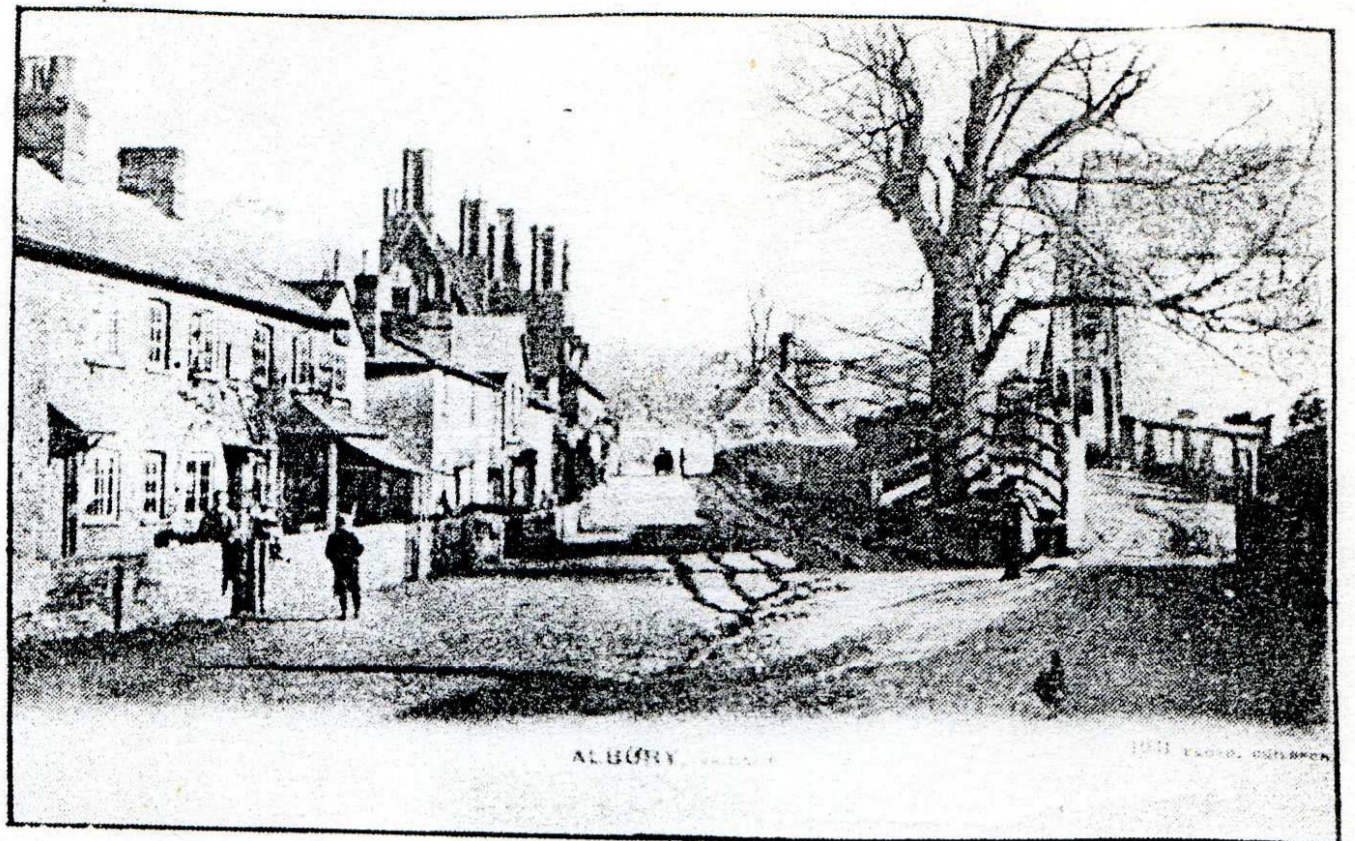
surface of the printing plate. The printer has not yet been identified, but it is known that minimum orders were 1,000 cards of each "shot", charged at about 30/- (£1.50) plus postage per thousand, to retail at 1d each. A profit margin of the order of £2 per thousand may not keep today's postcard dealer in corn-plasters, but it was then a net return approaching 100% on counter sales, though less when stock was wholesaled via Lasham and others. And very soon Percy realised he had a tiger by the tail.

Demand grew quickly. Guildford was covered, but there remained Woking, Farnham, Godalming and Dorking and the villages between, which Percy was now recording with his heavy equipment. As well as his Post Office responsibilities, his shop and the studio work, Percy had to negotiate and service agencies through South West Surrey.

"It was hard work at first, but once the thing got going I could hardly cope with the orders". Percy recalled that "there was a counter running the whole length of my shop piled with nothing but postcards and a stream of people was in all day, some spending 17/- and 18/- at a time in buying them". Some of the stock supplied to agents carried their imprint rather than Lloyd's.

Occasionally both names appear. Among the first were S. & E. Willmott of Woking, Stedman of Godalming, H. Bullen, Post Master at Holmbury St. Mary, Elliotts of Cranleigh, G. Bushby at Wonersh, and F. Blomfield at Woking. Of these, Stedman was one of the first, selling Lloyd's cards by March 1902. The new venture caused Percy to give up the Post Office in 1901 or early '02. By 1903 he had photographed parts of West Sussex including Horsham and Midhurst (via Maides Stores, Midhurst). In that year he produced a series on Reading in Berks., and Margate where his family often holidayed. Typically, the buckets and spades were joined by the tripod camera and portable dark tent, cases of glass plates and chemicals and developing dishes. Percy hired men by the day to put on a white coat and do the rounds of the deck-chairs with cards of the Margate Surf Memorial, etc. at 1d. each or two for 1½d.

The earliest undivided-back Lloyds carry no publisher's imprint



or serial number. The pictures bleed off three sides of the card leaving up to half its face clear for messages. This writing area progressively diminished after 1902 until the first full-bleed photos appeared in 1905 covering the entire card. The earliest recorded identification appears as "Lloyd, Albury" on a u.d.b. view of Ripley (Surrey not Yorkshire!) cancelled May 1902. Later imprints include "Lloyd Series, Albury". "P. Lloyd, Albury", "Lloyd and Son, Albury" and "Lloyd, Guildford", etc. Those first cards can be confirmed as his, since later re-issues carry Lloyd identification.

An enchanting feature of Lloyd's work is the occasional hard-tinted card. All were painted individually, with impressively painstaking brushwork. They really rate a special "H.T. "H.T.L." category in dealer's boxes: "Hand Tinted Lloyd"!

His first coloured work so far noted is a view of St. Martha's chapel near Guildford, cancelled 19.12.01. Percy's wife did some tinting, but most was carried out by a Miss Augusta Warren of Coomb End, Shere. She died in 1911/12. Payment was probably under 1d per card, but there never occurs the hasty colour-wash technique sometimes found on other publisher's work. Excellent cloud effects were built into most coloured Lloyd pictures, overcoming the featureless skies of black and white prints (the collodion/iodide emulsion was insensitive to white cloud detail unless exposures were

taken directly into the light. This raised other problems!). The only Lloyd example which really comes unstuck is that St. Martha's card. Here Percy followed the fashion for moon-faking and a false moon was touched in. In monochrome this was fine, but when it came to colour the artist forgot that this was a pseudo night-shot. So the card records a fine Summer's day in full technicolour. Unfortunately though the "sun" is squarely in the Northern sky.

Whilst he never went to the lengths of, say, F. Frith whose superimposed motor-car and sundry bystanders appear with such regularity that collectors recognise them as old friends, Percy did a certain amount of "artistic enhancement". The absence of cloud in black and white work was overcome with the aid of cotton wool stuck to the back of the glass plate before transferring the image to sensitised paper. As the plates had to remain wet and required immediate developing, the portable dark tent was carried. If this was not first shaken out, floating dust fell onto the collodion-coated plate to show up a swarm of midges on the finished exposure. This can be seen on card no. 1190 where the individual spots have been ringed by Percy for later touching out, and then overlooked. This was uncharacteristic of his work. He clearly sought to give depth and interest to his views by encouraging passers by to pose, and this has left us with a number of excellent studies of rustic characters.

Horse-drawn G.P.O. vans were regularly making fully laden special deliveries to "The Studio". The quantity of plates held in Germany caused Percy in 1903 to begin a numbering system. These generally appear on the front (photo) side, and begin at 1,001: "The Bank, Woking", ending probably at 1,249: "Lower Street, Shere".

The first 175 cards of this series were first issued in 1903, almost certainly in April. The series was completed by mid-1905. The system had its flaws. In several cases different cards bear identical numbers which must have caused occasional pain and anguish during re-ordering. A life time later, let us all give thanks for serial numbering!

Initially, Percy travelled in a trap pulled by "Tommy" and driven by young Bert Stedman from nearby Watery Lane. They regularly appear in Percy's shots, Bert usually looking as if he was holding his breath. This outfit was replaced by an American steam road car, but Percy had to give it up because heat or vibration affected his photographic plates. The car caught fire at Ewhurst, and was at all times a local sensation. By 1910 Percy had bought a De Dion Bouton open tourer with rear dickey seat, LCC registration LD 9064 (or 9054). It was till the only car in Albury, and pebbles at Percy's window meant an emergency callout. He once drove the Agent for Albury Park to the doctor at Shere, after the poor fellow swallowed his false teeth. The single cylinder engine gave



a powerful kick under compression and Percy's son Stanley broke a wrist crank-starting. The car appears in several cards.

Stanley was born 1898. With his very pretty sisters, Hilda and Gladys, the children accompanied Percy on many photographic expeditions, to be seen often in the cards.

Some issues circa 1904 are imprinted "Lloyd, Guildford". This anticipated a move to 104 High Street, corner of Quarry Street, for which Percy had also arranged new stationery. However, negotiations fell through and he continued to operate from Albury.

All production so far mentioned was clearly the output of the same German printer, accounting for 87% of the 480 Lloyd cards recorded to date. Of the remainder, F. Hartmann printed for Lloyd at their Saxony works in 1904, the cards carrying Hartman's logo and usually Lloyd's imprint. Further Lloyd-Hartmann issues appeared in 1905 though the printer's name and logo are omitted.

Hartmanns were operating in London from 45-46 Farringdon Street, E.C., having begun publication in Britain in 1902. By the end of 1905 Percy had engaged the Photophane Co. to print for him at Brockley, London S.E. He was also at one stage in touch with Beagles of London, though nothing appears to have come of this. Meantime the German printer continued to receive some of the new work. For all three printers, new Lloyd issues appear to have ceased at about the end of 1906. This cut-off is fairly clear and suggests that by then Percy was satisfied that his area of operations was wide enough, and its photographic coverage adequate. Naturally, repeat-orders continued to be placed, until the outbreak of war in 1914 when Percy's lines of communication and supply with Germany were shattered. Unhappily this was the literal fate of his plates over there.

During the war he produced a small number of photo enlargements as postcards. Embossed "Lloyd Albury", this was limited production of very local interest which he had begun long before 1914. The mass-

produced stock in hand would have kept the network primed for a while, and Lloyd cards of pre-war vintage have been recorded with cancellations dated into the 1920's. But the sun was setting on the Golden Age and with hundreds of other publishers, Percy Lloyd did not resume volume production after the war. The G.P.O. delivered the coup de grâce by doubling the postcard mailing rate to 1d. in June 1918.

Percy's son Stanley left the R.A.F. in 1921, to join his father a year later in setting up a new business at 4 High Street, Guildford as photographic studios and retailers of cameras and equipment. Percy moved to "Selwyn", 42 York Road with the intention of retiring, but the new venture was to keep him active until his death on July 6th, 1946, aged 81. The business continued until 1969, following a move in 1954 to 144 High Street (later renumbered 156).

How many different cards did Lloyd issue? We shall never know conclusively, but an educated guess suggests perhaps 800 in all, including some duplication of exposures which recur in differing series. The writer is preparing a check list. Total production? Harder still. Taking the known minimum print order of 1,000 cards per plate, and an estimated 800 issued, the lowest possible figure is perhaps 800,000. In fact of course the many repeat orders and bigger initial runs will have taken total production well into the millions. Try finding them now!

When did Lloyd start publishing? Percy said he was "one of the first Englishmen to make picture postcards on a large scale" beginning with the sale to Frank Lasham "somewhere about 1898". An advertisement in a 1900 guide book ("Surrey's Capital - Guildford") reads:

"J. Lloyd & Son, Photographers, Albury Post Office, near Guildford. Out-of-door photography a speciality. Weddings and family groups, Landscapes, Residences, Interiors, Animals, etc. photographed at any distance. A LARGE COLLECTION OF ARTISTIC SCRAP PHOTO-



GRAPHS OF SCENERY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD". (As printed).

Singnificantly, picture postcards are not mentioned, whilst prominence is given to view photos in the older scrap format. Taken together with Percy's understandable uncertainty 26 years later, the 1898 claim must remain open to question until fresh evidence is faound. No doubt Lloyd cards will be traced which pre-date the August 1901 discovery, and the writer would be delighted to hear from others on this and all Lloyd topics.

The Guildford shop at 4 High Street was long ago demolished for road widening, but The Studio still stands in Church Lane, Albury, renamed and divided into flats. The big window of the first-floor North Studio still overlooks Pratts Stores, and in the Village Hall hangs a clock inscribed "Lloyd, Albury Post Office".

Historian and antiquarian Dr. George C. Williamson of Guildford wrote in 1924 of the origins of the postcard, and its first mass popularity when issued to German soldiers in the Franco-German War of 1870. He concludes "the only real advantage that the world has ever derived from war was the introduction of the postcard".

Percy Lloyd would have liked that.