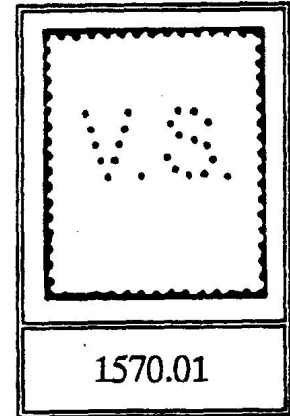


THE SHEFFIELD PERFIN - V.S.

Rosemary Smith

The perfin V.S. (V1570.01) has long been known to have Sheffield postmarks on all copies. It has also long been suspected to have been used by the Sheffield heavy armament firm of Vickers and Sons but no corroborating covers have been seen.



Two weeks ago I bought a cover which had this perfm and embossed on the envelope flap was, "**Vickers Sons & Maxim Limited, Sheffield**". The stamp was a 3d Jubilee and dated 3 JA 98. According to the Gault Catalogue with Details, this perfin was in use from 1885 to 1925.

You could be excused for thinking, "So what! Just another new identity". To me it was far more than a new identity. There are very few known Sheffield perfins for which I am short of an identifying cover so this was a red letter day for me. However, the interesting and intriguing thing about this cover was the "**& Maxim**" in the identity. Almost all "Sheffielders" have heard of Vickers steel and most are aware that they made their name famous for the development of heavy armoured vehicles, particularly the tank.

I had never heard the name 'Maxim' in conjunction with any Sheffield product and for me it brought forth memories of America, Indian wars and trouble with the Mexicans. (I have a deplorable taste in films.) So I paid a visit to the local history library where I found some interesting information.

In 1867 the large Don Steel Works of Vickers, Sons & Co were erected at Brightside in Sheffield. In 1879-81 the breech loading gun finally replaced the muzzle-loader and compound armour was introduced by Brown's (also of Sheffield).

In 1884 Albert Vickers (one of the '& Sons') became chairman of the newly formed Maxim Gun Co. of Birmingham set up to manufacture the machine gun invented by the extrovert American, Hiram Maxim. In 1888 the age of iron at last came to an end when all steel armour was perfected, mainly at Vickers. Between 1886 and 1909 the increase in armour resistance was 180%: but the increase in gun energy was 200%.

Vickers took over the Birmingham firm of Maxim-Norderfeldt Gun and Ammunition Company in 1897 and made the Vickers - Maxim stand for, in words from the local history book, "the very roar of battle to a generation hardly yet vanished". The Maxim breech loader atop the Vickers tank was part of the beginning of modern warfare as seen in the 1st and 2nd World Wars.

I look forward to finding a 'V.S.' cover prior to 1897 or later than 1914 to see if there was a period for the perfin when Vickers Sons was the sole name for the perfin.

ooOOOOOoo