

UNION-CASTLE MAIL STEAMSHIP CO.LTD.

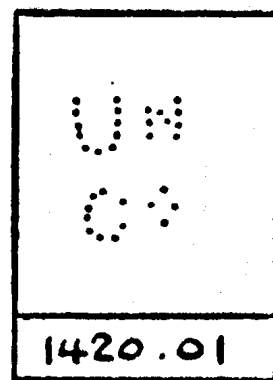
Rosemary Smith

This is a prime example of why I find collecting perfins so fascinating. It makes history and geography come alive.

Some time ago I had a letter from member Peter O'Keeffe concerning the perfin UN/C°. He had been to a display of stamps and postal history of St.Helena, given by Bob Deakin, including several items to and from 'Prisoners of War' from the Boer War.

One cover appeared to be from a British soldier, a guard at a P.O.W. Camp, writing home to the U.K. The stamps were two QV ½d vermilion stamps and a 1d lilac, the latter being perfined UN/C° 11,10/10,4. The date was 3rd April 1900 but no clue on the cover as to the user of the perfin.

I sent Peter a photocopy of the UN/C° perfins from the Gault catalogue and said I was sure the perfin on the cover in question was U1420.01. This was the perfin for the Union Steamship Co.Ltd. which merged with Castle Line (Donald Currie) in February 1900 to form the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Co.Ltd.



When this information was passed to Mr Deakin he added more information. The letter was from a British soldier in the R.A.M.C. (Royal Army Medical Corps), who was sent to St.Helena prior to the arrival of Boer P.O.W.'s. It is therefore assumed that he was part of the advance party who were to prepare a suitable camp site for the prisoners.

The postmark was a normal St. Helena 'Cork' cancel, and at that time soldiers' mail was not subject to censorship. There was no U.K. arrival mark.

The Union Steamship Co. Ltd. and Castle Line (Union Castle Mail Steamship Co. Ltd.) were the main carriers of mail to and from the U.K. to South Africa and southern parts in the late 1800's and early 1900's therefore the perfin was no doubt used correctly. My guess is that the sender used the normal 1d postage but when taken for forwarding on board ship, it was overweight, hence the added 1d lilac with the perfin of the steamship company.

I am informed that the 'C' in the perfin had a missing hole - the second in at the top of the 'C'.