

NEW DIE "MJE" - M. J. ELLINGSEN

A Tale of Two Covers

By Rosemary Smith

In 1984 I bought an entire at Stampex for a very reasonable price. It was dated OCT 31 1885, postmarked Edinburgh duplex 131, the stamp was the 2½d lilac of the 188-3 issue. The perfin was a new one to my 'book of covers' which I carried round to all stamp fairs.

When I returned home and checked in the perfin catalogues available at that time, I discovered that not only was it a new identity but it was a new die too. I duly reported it to the Catalogue/Bulletin Editor, Tony Edwards. It appeared in the April 1985 Bulletin as a new identity but had not been given a catalogue number.

When the Edwards Catalogue was published, slowly a letter at a time, the die was given a number, M3335.01, but there was no illustration, just typed 'MJE'. This state of affairs must have continued until Roy Gault began his *Illustrated Catalogue with Details*.

When I received my worksheet for the "MJ" dies of the 'M' section, I found that M3335.01 was still only typed as "MJE" and at the side were the words, "*Without an illustration, This will be deleted!*" Naturally I sent the cover to Roy, in some trepidation I may add because of letters being lost in the post. It was obvious that this was a rather rare cover.

When I sent the cover to Roy I also told him the second part of this story. He it is that thinks this whole tale is worth the telling.

The following year, 1985, I was once again at Stampex. One of my dealer friends who saved items for me, showed me a cover and, although it did not have a perfin on, he thought it might interest me as the stamp was overprinted. He had assumed it was another security device.

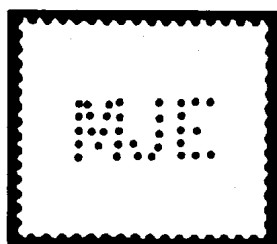
Imagine my surprise when I saw an entire almost identical to the one from M.J. Ellingsen which I had purchased the previous year from a different dealer. This later entire was dated 26 MY 1886, again from

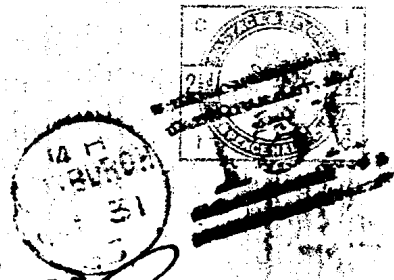
Edinburgh with the same 2½d stamp and actually addressed to the same firm in Norway. The stamp is overprinted in carmine with **M.J.E.**

The dealer had this entire on a sheet with a photocopy of a page from the June 1985 Gibbons Stamp Monthly. The article was headed, *Overprinted Stamps and Advertising Rings for Private Firms 1856-90*. The relevant passage in this article was highlighted and it read, **"In spite of the ban on the overprinting on the face of stamps in 1867, several instances are known used in the 1880s. A particularly interesting example of a late use was recently found, and is shown in figure 1. This cover was used from Edinburgh to Norway with an 1883/4 2½d (S.G.210) overprinted in bright carmine 'M.J.E.' which from the contents proved to stand for M.J.Ellingsen, Shipbrokers of Leith and dated February 1886."**

As the entire being offered was three months later than the one mentioned in the article, and the price being asked was 25 times the price of the entire from the year before, my cautious nature about such coincidences came into play. I examined the entire very, very closely with my glass but the black postmark was definitely laid **over** the overprint so I was satisfied that this was not a forger at work with his bull-dog outfit and carmine ink. I told my friendly dealer that I would think about it. It was only mid morning and I had lots of other dealers to see. Would my money last out, I asked myself? However, mid afternoon came, I had not spent all my 'spending money', so I returned to the original stand. The entire was still there and the deal made.

It is only since filling in the 'M' worksheets and being told by Roy that the perfin cover may be a unique item that I have really appreciated that I have an interesting pair of covers. I have shown them at a few Philatelic Societies when I have displayed "Perfins" but I never thought to stress their importance. Are there any more lurking out there? If so tell Roy.





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