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PERFIN IDENTIFICATION by Tony Swales.

Identifying perfins can often be a simple task, especially if an identities catalogue is to hand. Then it is just a matter of checking that the perfin matches the catalogue description. Or, you may have a perfined stamp on a cover with an identity printed on the front or embossed on the

flap. Trade Cards, too, are an easy form of identification.

Single, loose perfins, however, can make identification a task worthy of the deductive talents of Sherlock Holmes. Take as an example a recently acquired perfin of mine. The perfin is MAY/ & Co. 15,10,7/13/8,6 5½mm. This is not the most common of names. Yet enquiries of collectors more knowledgeable than myself have brought no results, nor have searches through Bulletins of the last 6 years or New Identities helped at all.

Some information comes from the stamp itself. Fortunately there is a clear and almost complete double circle postmark of Aldershot, dated 17 Sept '08, on an Edwardian 1d red. The perfin is in 3 lines and that is the sum total of information to be gleaned. The king looks stern but can volunteer nothing! !

Then, from the darkness of uncertainty, a gleam of hope in the shape of 3 German covers. 2 are registered envelopes from German banks, one in Cologne, one in Plauen. The other is an envelope from a firm with branches in 5 major cities. All were posted in 1922 and addressed to the same firm in England, namely SIMON, MAY & Co. Two were addressed only to Nottingham but the third, more specifically, to Week-day Cross, Nottingham.

Now here lies the problem of identification. Tantalising fragments of fact which pose more questions. Is the perfin MAY/ & Co. that of the firm Simon, May & Co of Nottingham or is it merely wishful thinking? If so, what is the connection between the Aldershot postmark on the perfined stamp and the Nottingham address on the German covers? Is there any connection between this perfin and the firm of Bryant and May the match makers? Perhaps some Bulletin readers may be able to supply additional information which would help to positively identify this puzzling perfin.