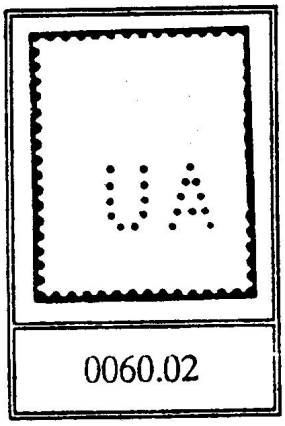
HISTORY OF PERFIN USERS

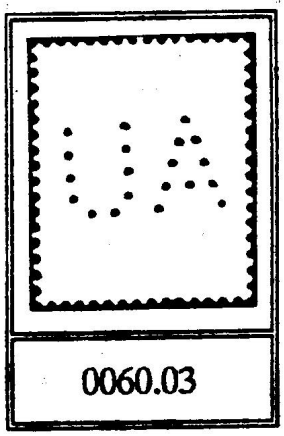
UNITED ALKALI COMPANY

from Mike Bavin.

The following two perfins are known used by United Alkali Co. Ltd. These illustrations are taken from the *Gault Illustrated Catalogue with Details.*



In use: 1895-1918.
Dates: 9 Oct 1899 -11 Feb 1913.
Issues: B 1d E ½d(both), 2d, 2½d, 5d
F ½d, 1d, 2½d H ½d
I(RC) 1d. 2½d
Ident: United Alkali Co Ltd.
Liverpool.
Pmks: Also Bristol. Fleetwood.
St Helens & Widnes.



In use: 1895-1936.
Dates: 8-1-94 = 11-10-23
Issues: B 1d E ½d (gn), 2½d I ½d, 2d
M ½d, 1½d N 1½d
O ½d. 1½d. 2½d
Ident: United Alkali Co Ltd.
Liverpool.
Pmks: Also St Helens (679).

The United Alkali Company was incorporated on 1 Nov. 1890 and capitalised at six million pounds. It was formed by merging almost all of the companies belonging to the Bleaching Powder Company and included 48 factories in Lancashire, Scotland, Ireland and on the Tyne, and three Salt Works. This was the first merger in the world's chemical industry, and was a nationalisation of the major part of the then British chemical industry.

The formation of the United Alkali Company was due to economic pressure, in particular the introduction of the Solvay soda process and American tariffs.

Hard soap, textile and glass manufacturers required soda for their manufacturing processes. Their needs were satisfied for a time by the sodium obtained from the ashes of burnt Kelp and Carilla. Demand resulted in other processes being developed. The lead chamber process for the manufacturer of sulphuric acid was introduced in 1875: sulphur or pyrites (iron sulphide) was burnt to give sulphur dioxide, which was oxidised by oxygen (as air) in the presence of nitrogen oxides. The resulting sulphur dioxide was absorbed in water in the lead chamber to give sulphuric acid. The reaction of salt (sodium chloride) with sulphuric acid gave sodium sulphate (known as saltcake) and hydrogen chloride, thousands of tons of which were allowed to escape to the atmosphere or discharged into rivers as hydrochloric acid, leading to the first Alkali Act (1863) and the appointment of Alkali inspectors. The saltcake was heated with coal and limestone to produce soda, which was extracted with water. The solution could be used, or evaporated to give the well known washing soda. The residue from the extraction were dumped initially, providing problems for the future generations.

In order to make the linked processes viable, use had to be made of the by-products. Hydrogen chloride was oxidized to chlorine which, with quicklime, gave bleaching powder. This replaced sunlight for bleaching cotton products (calico), releasing land on which calicos used to be spread out in the sun! It was also found possible to recover the sulphur from the saltcake - limestone residue.

Does any other perfin cover more industrial and economic changes I wonder?

* * * * *

Welcoming New Members Rosemary Smith.

One of our members, D R Bremner, belongs to a philatelic society which has a seemingly novel way of welcoming new members to their society. Whenever new members names and addresses are published in their newsletter, members whose names begin with a particular letter are asked to write to the newcomer. What do members feel about us adopting this idea? I know I have had some very friendly, and advantageous, exchanges with newer members who have written to me for advise. I am still writing to many of them. Drop me a line with your thoughts on the subject.