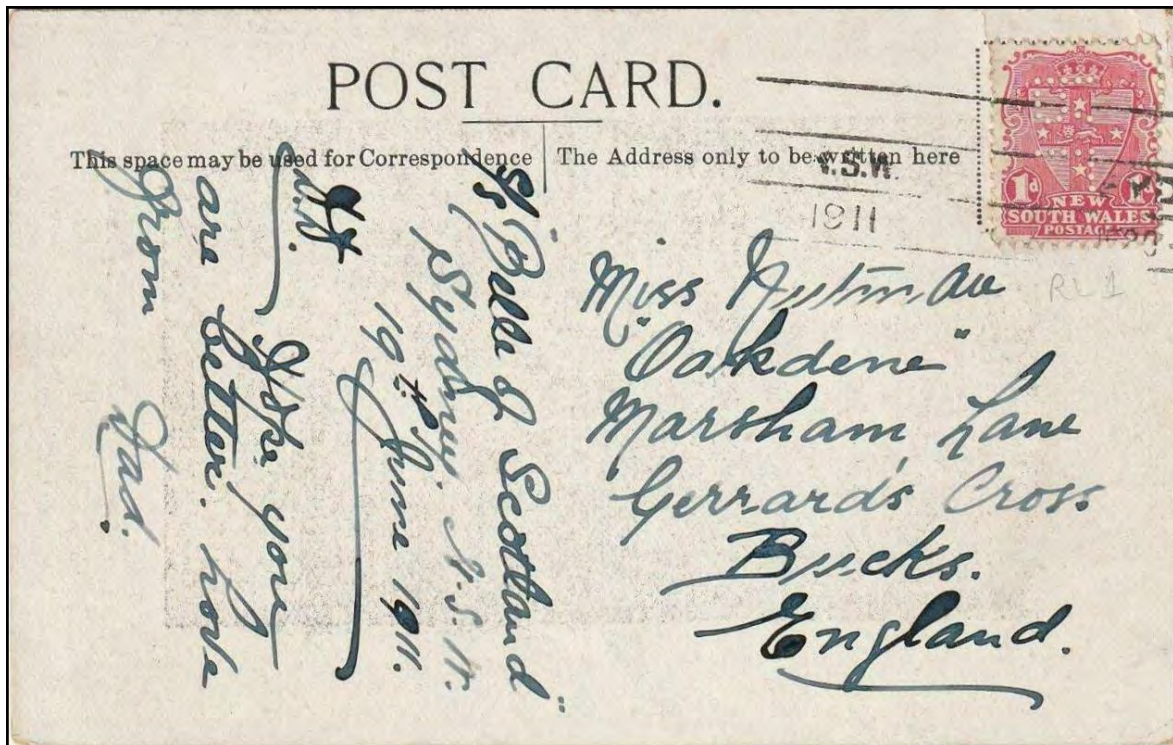


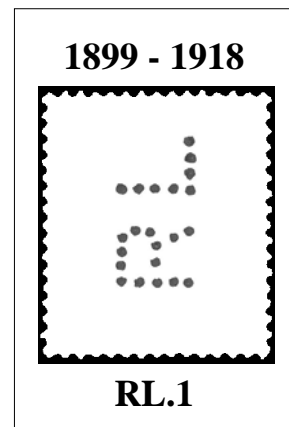
A BRITISH MARTIME HERO
& AN AUSTRALIAN PERFIN

John Mathews

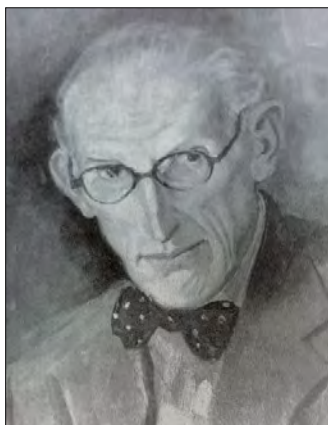
I was attracted to this auction item out of curiosity, as it looked like a probable illegal private use of a company perfin. It is a typical early 20th Century Australian postcard with an Australian scene on one side and space for the address and message on the stamp side. The item description simply said “R. L. perfin cover postcard picture Kuring Gai Chase Australia pre-decimal.” Ku-ring-gai Chase is a National Park on the northern outskirts of Sydney. The stamp is a New South Wales 1d red “Shield”, with perfin pattern RL.1 (Australian perfin catalogue number), cancelled by a machine cancel dated 1911.



The addressee is a Miss Nutman at Gerrard’s Cross, Buckinghamshire. The writer’s address is given as “s/s Belle of Scotland”, Sydney, NSW, and dated 19th June 1911. The message starts “D. D. “, and is signed “from Dad”. The search was on – was it illegal private use of a perfin? The answer turned out to be “no”, and the card as a whole was a proving item for the perfin, but how was this conclusion reached?



The start was with the address for Miss Nutman – “Oakdene”, Marsham Lane, Gerrard’s Cross, Bucks, England. If you don’t live close to this, you can do a reality drive courtesy of Google “Streetview” (“Oakdene” is number 22).



Gerald E. R. Smith
(1883-1959)

Kelly’s Directory for Buckinghamshire for 1911 ¹ (available at the web site for “Historical Directories”) shows that the resident at “Oakdene” was “Gerald E. R. Smith”, so what was the connection between Miss Nutman and Gerald E. R. Smith? The 1911 England Census shows that she was his 21-year-old niece, Dorothy ². Details of others in the household reveal that Gerald had married Dorothy’s older sister, and that Dorothy’s mother and an aunt were also living there. Dorothy’s “Dad” was not there because he was in Sydney or close

thereto! It seems that the “D. D.” at the start of the message on the card probably stood for “Dear Dorothy”.

But what of “Dad”? Stepping back 10 years to the 1901 Census, the Nutman family were all living with the family of another uncle (Dorothy’s mother’s brother) – Dorothy, her older sister, their mother AND their father, William Nutman ². So, what was William Nutman doing in Sydney in June 1911?

To answer this, I went to the shipping news columns in the Sydney newspapers for June 1911, hoping that they printed passenger lists for incoming vessels. But the “Belle of Scotland” had arrived in Sydney at the end of May 1911 with a cargo of timber from North America, and had been taken into dry dock “for cleaning and repainting” before proceeding to Newcastle (NSW) to load coal for Manila (Philippines). From Manila it was then to proceed to Puget Sound, Washington State, USA, to load more timber for Australia. The shipping



Captain William John Nutman

report gave the ship's master's name as "Nutman"! It also said the ship's agent in Sydney was "R. Little & Co." ^{3,4} – hence the "R. L." perfin.

My curiosity then led me to find out more about Dorothy and William. Dorothy died, unmarried, on 31 October 1941 ⁵. William John Nutman was a Master Mariner, as was his father Samuel, and one of his brothers. William John Nutman gained "hero" status, and was awarded a gold Albert Medal (First Class) and other medals for saving an injured crewman in a storm in the Mediterranean Sea in 1896. The boiler of his ship, s/s "Aidar", had exploded and breached the ship's hull. A passing ship had rescued all the crew of the "Aidar" as it sank in the water before having to stand off lest the boats got sucked under. However, Captain Nutman insisted on staying on board with the injured fireman. Half an hour later, the "Aidar" had sunk but the rescuers then found Captain Nutman, still holding the now unconscious crewman, on an upturned boat, and saved them both ^{6,7,8,9,10}.



Painting – "I'll not desert him"
by Thomas M. M. Hemy

William John Nutman died at Woolacombe, Devon on 20 November 1933, aged 78 years ¹¹. A memorial window is in the Church of St. Sabinus in Woolacombe ¹². The window was a commission of the Nicholson Studios, and given to the church by Nutman's two daughters in 1936 ¹³. Gerald Edward Roberts Smith (Nutman's son-in-law) was the chief designer for the studio, and ran the company following the death of Archibald Keightley Nicholson in 1937 ¹⁴. The "Belle of Scotland" was sold in July 1912 and re-named "Baron Tweedmouth".

Dorothy Nutman's maternal grandfather – William Nutman's father-in-law – was Abraham Coakes (1807-1876), the notorious "swimming smuggler" at Mudeford, Dorset, but that is another (albeit interesting) story ^{15,16,17,18} ...

References

Captain W. J. Nutman

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9. *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* (NSW), 23 May 1896
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12. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_St_Sabinus,_Woolacombe.
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Abraham Coakes

15. England Census 1851.
16. England, Births & Christenings, 1853 (via FamilySearch – daughter Elisa)
17. www.smuggling.co.uk (then search "Mudeford")
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Medals awarded to
Captain W. J. Nutman