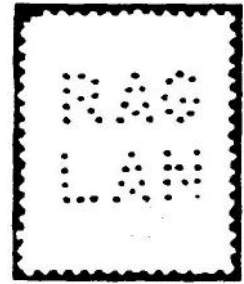


POSTMARK CLUES TO PERFIN IDENTITIES

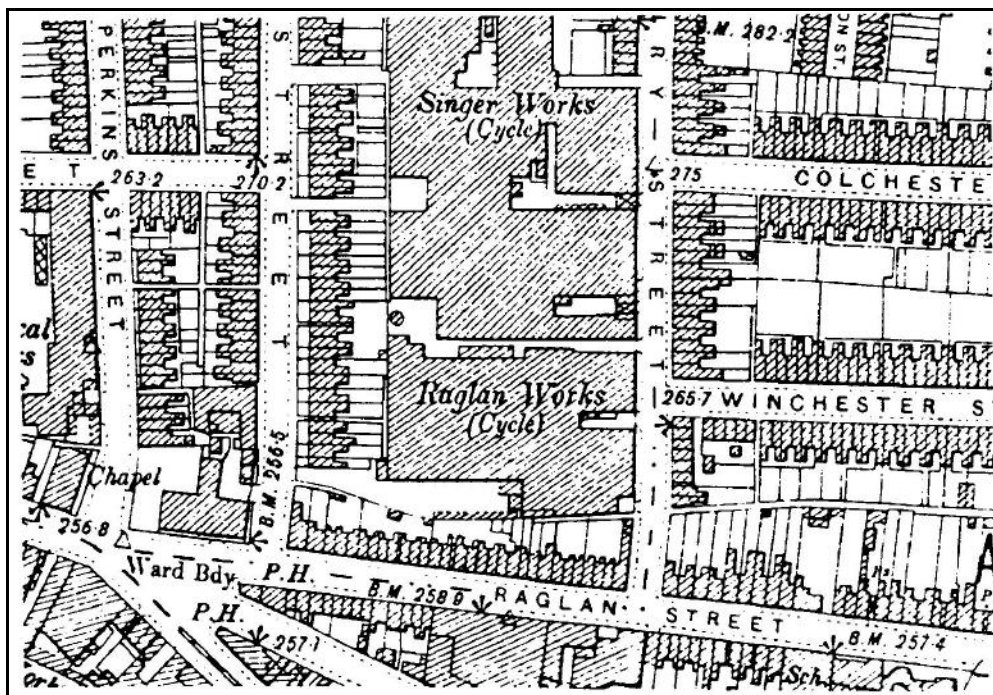
Roy Gault

Recently, while looking closely at examples of the full name perfin RAG/LAN (R0110.01), I noticed that all the visible postmarks were from Coventry. As this is where I was born and misspent much of my childhood I felt a special incentive to try and identify the user. I had just one clear date to go on - 18 March 1904.



R0110.01

A quick search through the Coventry Trade Directories from the turn of the century soon established the existence of 'The Raglan Cycle & Anti-friction Ball Co Ltd'. Their premises were known as the Raglan Works and were situated just off Raglan Street as can be seen from the portion of the O.S. map for Coventry (dated 1905). They were just one of scores of cycle manufacturers at work in the city around this time.



'The Cyclist' magazine for 23rd December 1896 records that 'The Raglan Cycle and Anti-friction Ball Co Ltd' was registered on 4th December 1896 with a share capital of £20,000. The stated aims of the company were to acquire and carry on the business of cycle manufacture formerly carried out by 'Taylor, Cooper & Bednell Ltd', and manufacture balls and other accessories for cycles formerly undertaken by 'The Ant-friction Ball Co.'

The late Victorian and Edwardian eras witnessed a dramatic boom in cycle manufacture, particularly so in Coventry, but by the end of Edward's reign the impact of the motor cycle and motor car had caused a number of the smaller cycle companies to become bankrupt. Sadly, one such casualty was the Raglan Cycle and Anti-friction Ball Company which was formally wound up on 24 September 1909.

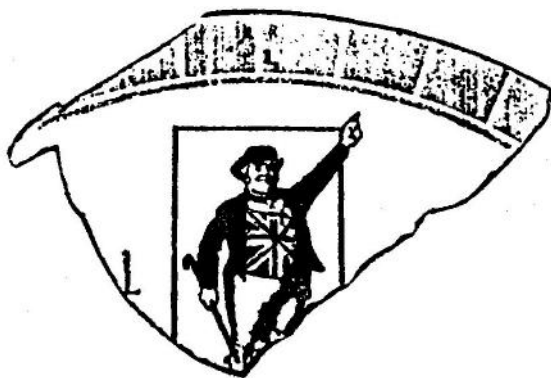
The RAG/LAN perfin is known on QV Jubilees and EVII definitives which ties in perfectly with the 1896-1909 dating of the Raglan Cycle Company. The known postmarks are all Coventry, so I am led to conclude that this was the user. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who can add any additional information regarding issues, dates and postmarks which might help substantiate the suspected identity?

Interestingly, 'Taylor, Cooper & Bednell Ltd' (later to become the Raglan cycle company) used the name RAGLAN to describe their bicycles as this 1892 advertisement bears witness.



I tried hard to find a picture of a typical 'RAGLAN' cycle, but failed. Many of Raglan's competitors embellished their advertisements with cycle illustrations but not so Taylor, Cooper & Bednell, who seemed to put their faith in words alone

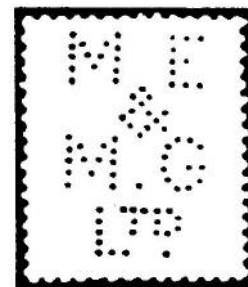
The ink had hardly dried on the preceding two pages when I received in the post the following photocopy from John Mathews in Australia. The stamps which were soaked off the scrap of paper were perfinned LRC (L4740.01) and postmarked Leicester, 16 May 1935. John recognised the figure as 'John Bull' and hoped that this and the postmark evidence would prove enough to identify the user. Although some twenty years too early, I had a look through my 1916 copy of Kelly's Leicestershire Trade Directory (kindly given to me by Dave Hill) for possible LRC users and came up with the following three - The Leicester Rag Company, The Leicester Rowing Club and The Leicester Rubber Co.



I remember as a child having a 'John Bull Printing Outfit' and could also vaguely recollect having repaired punctures in my cycle tyres with a 'John Bull' puncture repair outfit. To my astonishment, a search through the accumulation of years in my garage produced a battered old tin clearly labelled 'JOHN BULL Tyre Repair Kit' complete with the trade mark picture of John Bull identical to the one on John's photocopy. On the edge of the tin was printed 'John Bull Rubber Co Ltd, Leicester'. Clearly the perfin letters did not match this name but they pointed strongly to The Leicester Rubber Company as being the user. A Saturday morning at the Leicestershire Record Office established that The Leicester Rubber Company had indeed become the John Bull Rubber Company sometime before 1936, so John's dated piece must be from the changeover period. The earliest reference I can find to The Leicester Rubber Company is in 1906 when they were described as wholesale rubber factors just off Granby Street, Leicester. They moved away from the city centre to Evington Valley Road before becoming the John Bull Rubber Company Ltd circa 1935 and was still operating as such in 1973.

While investigating the Leicester Rubber Company perfin, I took the opportunity to search for the possible user of the four line perfin ME/&M.G/L^{td}. (M2360.01).

My only copy is on a KEVII ½d postmarked Leicester, 20 July 1904, but with so many letters involved in the perfin I felt confident I could find a match. Sure enough there was just one company with those particular letters, Moore, Eady & Murcott-Goode Ltd. Even the stop between the M and G is accounted for!



The hosiery manufacturers Moore, Eady & Co were well established at 89 Granby St, Leicester before the turn of the century, but sometime between 1901 and 1903 they were joined by Murcott-Goode to become Moore, Eady & Murcott-Goode Ltd. Although Leicester appeared to be their 'head office', they also had workshops in Broughton Astley, Burbage, Countesthorpe, Derby, Hinckley, Leamington, Market Harborough, Mountsorrel, and Thurmaston, although not necessarily all at the same time. They were still trading in 1957, but seem to have disappeared by 1960. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has copies of this perfin so that an accurate period of use for the die can be established by recording the issues and values involved, and also to discover if any of the other workshops used the perfin or whether it's use was confined to the 'head office'.