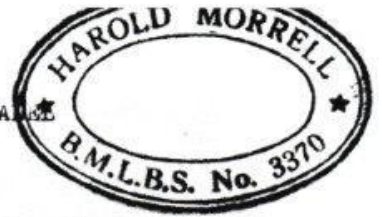


FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MATCHBOX LABEL PALLET

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INTRODUCTION. The last report (to associates) was made five years ago. There being no associate members now the purpose of the present report by the secretary is to advise members of the work done by those deputed to follow certain lines of enquiry. To allow a more complete understanding of the issues involved certain relevant details, some of which are not yet on record, have been added, thus giving a continuity of action.

It has been decided that all reports should be made available to all collectors.

GENUINE OR NOT? The "thirties" were an age of emancipation; collectors who started this decade with plenty of hard work and few benefits then began to enjoy the instruction passed on to them by the hobby literature which followed as a result of getting together in groups for exchange purposes. Matchmakers began to co-operate with gifts or sales of labels, thus accelerating the rate of growth of collections. But the demand for more labels was far in excess of the floating surplus, and there was nothing to satisfy the experts who were constantly searching for valuable old labels and were ready to pay the price for them. So the stage was set for the exploiter, and he duly made his appearance. One case will serve as an example.

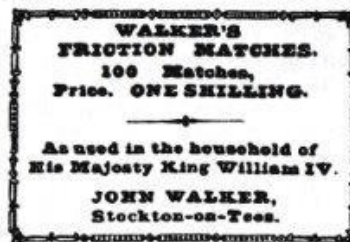
A dealer enclosed a few very old British labels on offer to a collector, requiring him to take great care of them as they were the only copies he had. The prices were very high. In fact he sent out four similar letters, all containing an identical batch of labels. There may have been more than four, but we are only concerned with these four because they were sent to a small group sharing a common interest which had brought them into close touch with each other. Apart from the age and rarity of the labels, none of which had been seen before by any of the four, there were many interesting peculiarities. The labels were all from different makers, yet paper, ink and type were identical, and all had the same degree of newness. Furthermore, all these materials were such as had not been used for match labels nor would have even been considered suitable. The paper was fibrous, of a fairly tough nature suitable for use with woodcuts. The ink was probably a mixture of fish-oil and lamp-black, similar to that supplied to amateurs for use with lino-cuts and woodcuts and vastly different from the high quality black ink used in the first half of the last century. One gained the impression that all had been printed together. Only three of the collectors returned the labels; the fourth did not: not that he had the slightest faith in the labels, but that he was determined to expose the fraud. He succeeded in doing this with the co-operation of the paper industry, that identified the esparto content as comparatively recent to papermakers, and of the typesetters who explained that the types had not yet been founded when the labels were supposed to have been printed. These labels are

included in the group illustrated on page 4. On all known varieties the ink is black. Paper colours can not be given as the full range is not known, but collectors can assume that any other varieties that come to light are of equal status.

Collectors now realised how vulnerable they had become and sought the protection to be had by mutual action. The British Matchbox Label and Booklet Society was formed, with its own hobby journal, meetings of members, and committee meetings where reports, policy, etc. were discussed. To attract those not immediately enrolled an exhibition was arranged to which each of the pioneers promised to bring the most treasured of his labels for the delectation of all, he having the same opportunities as everyone else. A most attractive decision, for all were anxious to see what the others had.

The result was unique; a score of exhibits showing the choicest labels from the albums of our foremost collectors, each with the owner standing by to give any information that might be needed. It was at this exhibition that the horizontal Troy lost face.

With such an abundance of rare labels to excite their appetite it is easy to understand that collectors accepted all these labels at their face value. The horizontal Troy was the only exception because it was the only label to be challenged at that show, and two decades were destined to pass before it could finally be discredited. The John Walker label had never been heard of; in fact it was known that his matches had been sold in unlabelled tins, as could be seen in the John Walker display at the Science Museum. The news, then, was in the nature of a thunderbolt when it was whispered round that a member had a John Walker label. How could this be possible if his tins bore no labels? Suspicion was lulled when the wording was known, for the earliest possible date was 1830 and it may well have been that a later method of packing, such as a cardboard box, might have been labelled.



← (reigned 1830-37)

So this label also was accepted at its face value and was featured in the introduction to the British Catalogue as a genuine label, though, by now, a second label had been reported. The years passed, bringing the news of a third label, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and then a block, brought home by Professor Egon Heym from a museum in central Europe. A pull from this block was identical with the illustration in The Matchbox Label and the old chicken and egg problem was revived. Which came first? The block was a modern stereo mounted on wood at type height, so if the labels were printed from the block they also were modern. But the block might have been made from a label. If so, why? To print labels? Or to donate to a museum? The blockmaker would have followed his usual procedure and enclosed with the block a few pulls in black ink on white paper for his customer's approval plus an account for his attention. These pulls were almost certainly

in existence. And, somewhere, there might also be a genuine label. From this point the investigation started. The panel has now decided that the John Walker label should be excluded from the British Catalogue until a label has been subjected to tests and proved to be genuine.

There is a remarkable coincidence about the three cases mentioned so far. The dealer who offered the old British labels was resident on the South coast; the Troy back-trail led to the South coast, where it was lost, as also did the back-trail of the John Walker. And all the original dealings occurred in the space of a few years.

BY WAY OF HISTORY. PHILLUMENIST is a word in common use. How many collectors know the origin of the word? The story goes back to the days when a collector of international fame sought a name for match-label collectors. A collector of stamps was known as a philatelist and she wanted something similar. The first part was easy, and so was the termination, but there was no basic equivalent for a matchlabel; yet something had to fill the space between the PHIL and the IST, even if the imagination had to be stretched somewhat. That was her problem, and, finally, she produced the word "phillumunist", advising her collector friends that in future they would be so described. Junior collectors said nothing, but waited to hear the views of their seniors. The seniors made their various comments. "What has that to do with match-label collecting?" "A phillumunist is a lover of light, and that applies to everyone" "It sounds nice, but doesn't describe us" "We are all phillumunists but I am a matchlabel collector as well" and so on.

The first committee meeting of the BML&BS was held. Those present had to decide on a name for the society and draw up a set of rules. The chairman stated that whatever name was chosen must begin with the word British, and all agreed. "Yes" said one member, plainly enjoying himself, "The British Phillumunist Society". General amusement, but the suggestion was not discussed, nor, apparently, was it expected to be. Such was the general reception of the lady's brainwave, and the word might well have passed into oblivion. But, somehow, the word reached the national press. Every newspaper in the country told us that matchlabel collectors were phillumunists. Radio quiz programmes long afterwards were still asking "what is a phillumunist?" and before long the general public had become quite convinced that all matchlabel collectors were phillumunists. The flood of publicity has now passed; one can look round and observe that we have both the one and the other in our little community, each being what he pleases and accepting the other on equal terms.

MORE FAKES. "The Pakistani labels" were a printing of collectors' labels, not a forgery, there being no originals to be counterfeited. They were printed under secrecy, issued as the genuine article, but with the facts disclosed to several people. A dealer was approached by another dealer who offered him sets of Pakistani labels. Two different sets had been set up in type and were being printed on many different colours of paper by a friend who lived to the East of London. The labels were "dirt cheap" and he could have as big a quantity as he liked. The offer was refused, with suitable comments. At the next society meeting these labels were very much in evidence. Some collectors bought them; others denounced them, alleging that the time interval since the word Pakistan had been decided was far too short to permit the printing and transit of the labels.

**NEW PATENT
CONGREVES.**

Every Match warranted to ignite
with facility ; no injurious ingredi-
ent used in manufacture of this
article.

R. BELL, Patentee,
No. 16, BASING LANE, LONDON.

**HALFORDS
CONGREVES**

**SWEENEY'S
LUCIFER
MATCHES**

**HALFORDS
CONGREVES**

**JAMES'S
LUCIFER MATCHES**

JAMES
**BEST
LONDON
CONGREVES**
JAMES

**JAMES'S
LUCIFER MATCHES**

TO IGNITE DRAW THE MATCH
BRISKLY THROUGH THE SAND
PAPER PROVIDED.

KEEP IN A DRY PLACE.

**BEST
LONDON
CONGREVES**