

John Walker - lighting up the world

Digital Education Resource Pack

June 2026

John Walker – digital education resource pack



- **“John Walker – lighting up the world”** tells the story of the invention of a simple commodity, the Friction Match, by the chemist John Walker of Stockton-upon-Tees in 1826
- Walker’s discovery literally changed the course of history affecting the lives of millions of people across the world
- The Friction Match provided a spark which lit-up the industrial revolution in England and ignited a global industry which at the end of the 19th Century had become as significant as today’s technology giants
- In the early days matches were expensive items, available only to the wealthy, but eventually they became cheap, commonplace, and essential items in everyone’s home
- It’s a fascinating story, exploring almost every aspect of human life including social history, forestry, chemistry, graphic design, shipping, politics, high-finance and industrial relations

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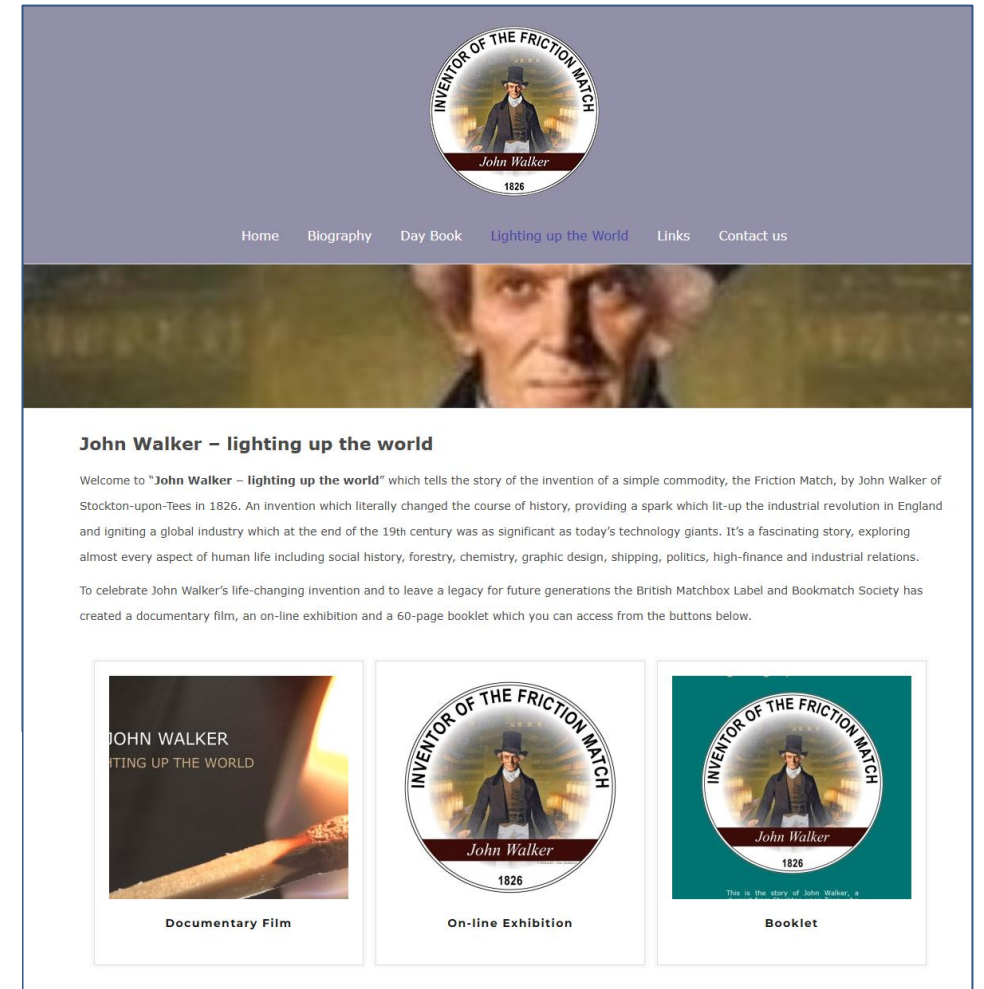
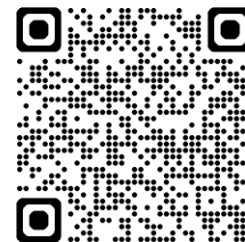


To celebrate John Walker's life-changing invention and to leave a legacy for future generations the British Matchbox Label and Bookmatch Society has created

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a documentary film, an on-line exhibition and a 60-page booklet which are available on our website phillumeny.com/johnwalker/lighting-up-the-world/

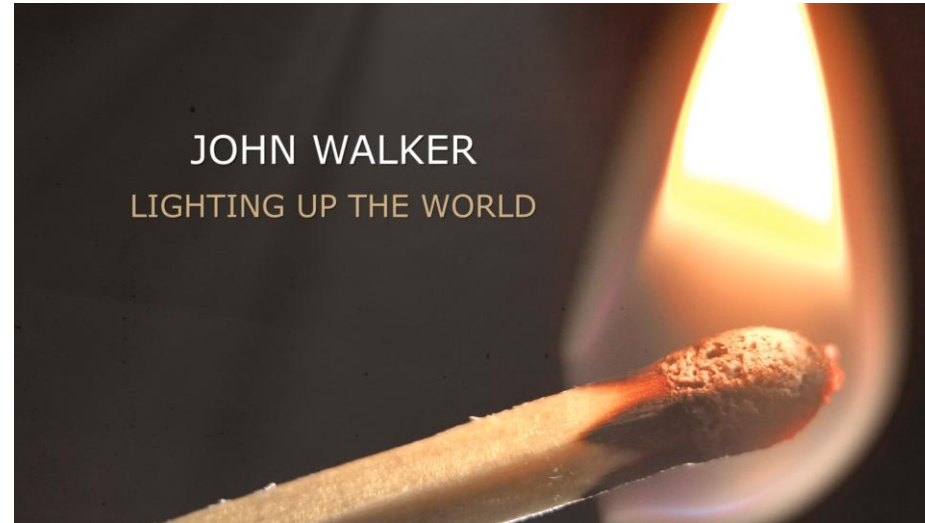
- This pack is intended to help you utilise these resources to provide education about John Walker

A screenshot of the website for 'John Walker – lighting up the world'. The website has a purple header with a circular logo for 'INVENTOR OF THE FRICTION MATCH' featuring John Walker and the year 1826. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for Home, Biography, Day Book, Lighting up the World, Links, and Contact us. The main content area features a large image of John Walker and a section titled 'John Walker – lighting up the world' with a welcome message and a list of resources: a Documentary Film, an On-line Exhibition, and a Booklet. Each resource is represented by a small image with a caption below it.

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Documentary Film



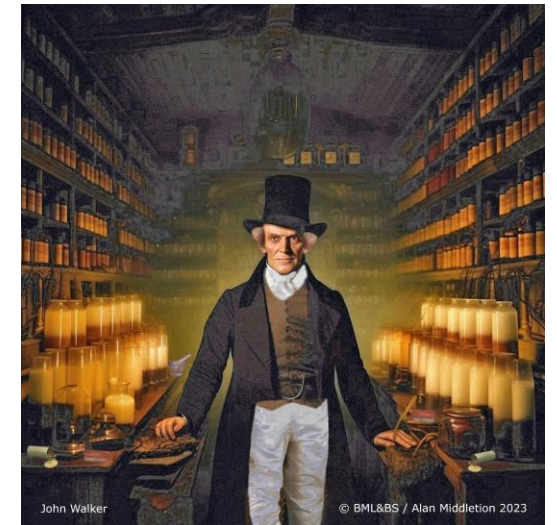
- We are proud that the Society secured a [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) grant for £14,760 in January 2025 to fully fund the making of a [documentary film](#) about John Walker and the impact of his invention on the world
- This project was made possible thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, which allowed us to engage with [Lonely Tower Film and Media](#) from Durham to make the film with us
- Our film is available [here](#)



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Other Resources – image of John Walker

- John Walker gave no public interviews nor any personal account of his life nor is there any verified image of him, so we have to rely on anecdotal evidence from his family, friends and customers to get some clues about the enigmatic John
- Since 1927 a number of attempts have been made to find an image of John Walker, but these have all proved to be false
[False John Walkers](#)
- The British Matchbox Label and Bookmatch Society has used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create the re-imagined image of John Walker used on our web site, by taking all the contemporary written accounts and synthesising an image



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Other Resources

- Twelve large Information Panels, which are available to hire in A0 and A1 size

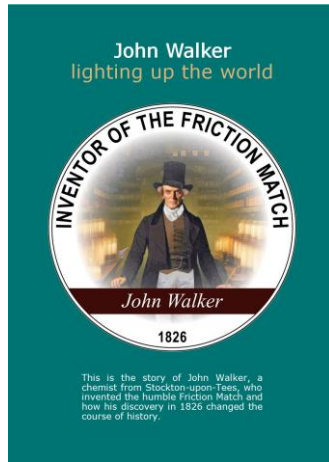
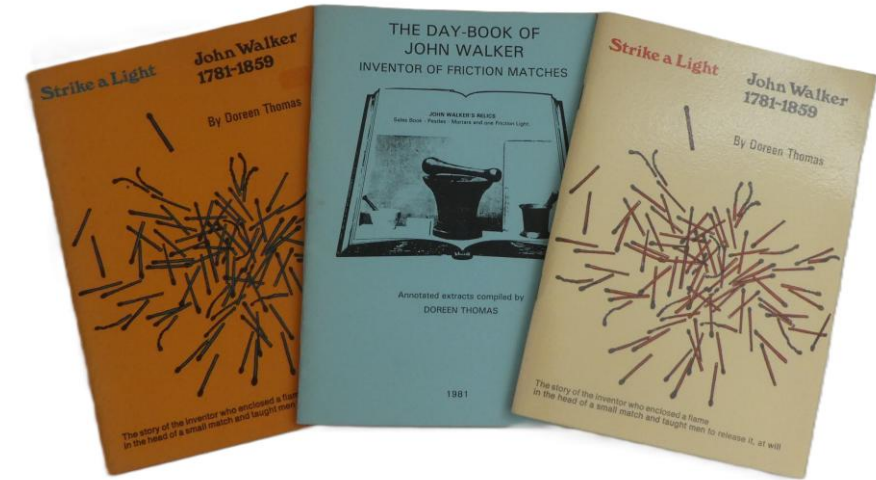


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Other Resources – printed materials

- From 1958 right up until her death in 1997 at the age of 77 Doreen Thomas of Middlesborough tirelessly championed John Walker
- She wrote a definitive book about the man which was published in 1971 with a revised edition in 1990
- In 1981 she wrote a companion book about the Day Book of John Walker
- Unfortunately these books are now out of print



- In 2026 the British Matchbox Label and Bookmatch Society published a 60-page booklet about John Walker and the match industry that began after his 1826 invention, which includes significant new research

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Other Resources – public resources

- Preston Park Museum in Stockton-on-Tees holds the world's leading collection of John Walker artefacts
prestonparkmuseum.co.uk
- The Science Museum holds John Walker's Day Book and his Pestles and Mortars in their Collection
collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk



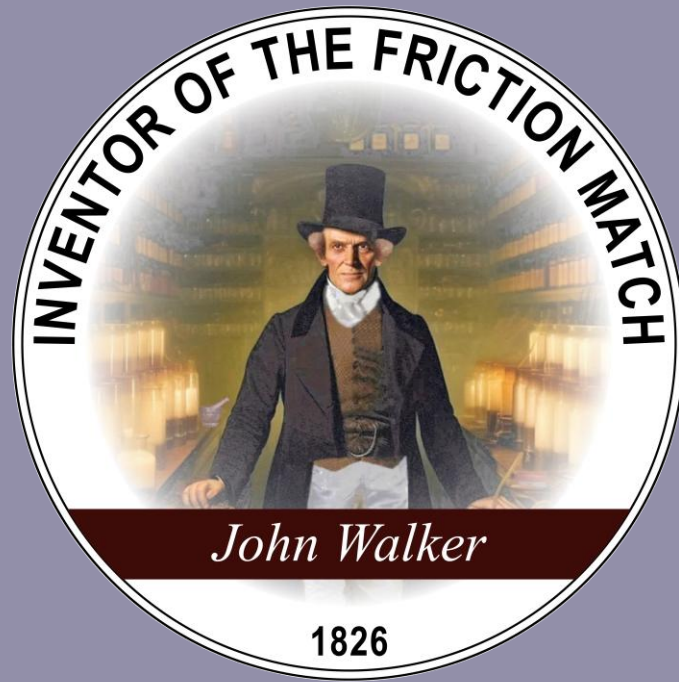
Art Deco print by Abby Owen, a local artist

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Other Resources

- The British Matchbox Label and Bookmatch Society is always available to provide help, advice and guidance about John Walker, the global match industry and the hobby of Phillumeny
- We would also like to hear your stories about John Walker
- Please contact us on johnwalker2026@phillumeny.com



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