

A History of Redheads!

The opening of Bryant & May's first Australian match factory on 15th December 1909 at Church Street, Richmond, Victoria was heralded by the first Commonwealth government of newly-federated Australia. The government of the day was anxious to encourage secondary industry and pledged tariff protection of local manufacturers. The Australian arm of Bryant & May has weathered various levels of tariff protection, industrial action, two world wars and competitors to take its place as a stalwart in Australian Commercial History.

The name Redheads was derived from the red striking head of the "Safety Match". Introduced to Australia when Bryant & May started manufacturing matches. These new red "Safety Matches" were much welcomed as they presented fewer health risks than earlier matches and greatly minimized the risk of accidental fires.

The earlier "Strike Anywhere" matches were made with poisonous white phosphorous and were very sensitive to friction, as the name suggests, with almost any surface. The safety matches could only ignite if struck on the prepared surface made of non-poisonous "red" or "amorphous" phosphorous that was painted on the side of the matchbox. The famous "Redheads" logo was created in 1946 and soon she assumed a personality of her own. She then proceeded to carve out a place for herself at the forefront of Australian awareness.

The logo has become affectionately known as "Miss Redhead" and is instantly recognized by the majority of Australians and can truly be said to have become part of Australian folklore. There has been four major updates on the 1946 pack design and hundreds of variations for collectors' series and commemorative themes. The first change to the Redheads label was in 1958 with a new hairdo, all other details are basically the same as the original.

At this stage Redheads was predominantly a Victorian brand. The 1971 design saw an update of both the Redheads face and hairstyle to match the fashion look of that period. Labelling changed from horizontal to vertical display at this time. This was the first Redheads pack to go into national distribution. In 1975 the red background pack was developed to overcome the problem of rapidly changing hairstyle fashions and to give the product greater visibility on retail shelves. This design, with minor typestyle and positioning variations, continues to be used today.

In 1998 Bryant & May was purchased by Swedish Match who continue to maintain the high standard of excellence previously achieved by Bryant & May.



1946



1958



1971



1975



Current