
The Origin

Barber's Livingston Cigar Lights bear a label of the historic meeting of Livingston and Stanley, while another old, established firm, C. Simlick, with premises in Martin Street, London, issued a special label in 1874 to commemorate the occasion of the marriage of the then Duke of Edinburgh to the Grand Duchess Marie, daughter of the Tsar, who is shown in her bridal dress.

Collards (Liverpool) similarly issued a commemorative label in 1875 to celebrate the first crossing of the English Channel by the famous swimmer, Captain Webb.

In the same year, Arctic Views, showing the Aurora, really lovely labels, beautifully executed, made their appearance; while Dixons also issued a series bearing a portrait of Sir Own Nares of *H.M.S. Discovery* on top, and a view in the Arctic Region, with dogs and sledge on the bottom.

It was also during 1875 that the famous Punch and Dog Toby graced the labels of Punch's Congreves.

A popular label among collectors was the old Sovereign issues. One series bears the unusual design of Queen Victoria, head and shoulders, in two similar positions, side by side. Few such queer double Royalty series have appeared, bearing two exactly alike portraits on the one label.

Barber and sons also used the famous Tichborne case of the seventies to illustrate a series of labels. They bore a caricature of Council on the front, and one of Tichborne on the reverse side.

Samuel Plimsol, of Plimsol Line fame, also figured on a label, while one manufacturer got in a dig at Darwin with his brand of Darwinian Matches, the labels portraying a number of monkeys, smoking, reading a newspaper, climbing, etc.

But the strangest label I have come across was one issued by Seanors of Rothwell, near Leeds, bearing a condensed version of the firm's history. Claiming to be the oldest established match manufacturers in England (which was not the case, as they did not commence making matches until 1840), they made much of the fact that their match works had been once totally destroyed by fire, rebuilt, and then on three further occasions had been partially destroyed by fire again, and each time rebuilt. Perhaps they considered it a testimonial to the efficient fire-producing properties of their matches! They also gave us H.R.H. Prince Albert Victor on their old Victor Brand issue.

Almost every subject has been shown on labels—even graves. An Irish match, Leading Lights, bears a label showing Parnell's tomb. Ireland also gave us the green and yellow Irish Martyrs series. Japan was quick to cash in on the Irish Home Rule agitations, issuing a label for the Irish market colored in red and green and prominently marked "Home Rule".

In 1895, the Salvation Army placed their Giant Match Tapers on the market, for lighting the lamps of motors, carriages, gas stoves, etc. These matches were $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches long and colored red, green, and purple, among other colors.

A label that aroused some opposition from animal lovers was the Tally Ho series issued by Gees of Gloucester. This showed a Huntsman Jumping a Fence on the top of the box, and on the bottom a picture of The Kill.

Of Labels: II

The School Match, issued in 1897, bore labels portraying school scenes in the “good old days.” One shows the Master [*I tried to get my students to call me ‘Master’—didn’t work!*] in knee breeches, with a book in one hand and a cane held behind his back, [*Ohhhh, those were the ‘good old days!’*] while a scared, unhappy looking boy stands woefully in front of him.

Both rare and elusive is The Merton Monster label. It is not an illustration of a terrifying monster, as one might imagine, but a reproduction of the large Merton Pink, a flower which won many show prizes and, owing to its size, was known as the Merton Monster. During alterations to an old grocer’s shop, just under fifty of these boxes were discovered, where they had lain hidden for sixty years and are probably the only known existing specimens.

Another old series was the Border Match, showing a private in the King’s Own Scottish Borderers and a view of the Royal Border Bridge. These were issued by the old Hulme’s Patent Advertising Match Company, which closed down in 1905.

Many familiar London names have appeared on labels, including the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben Buckingham Palace and the Changing of the Guard, House of Lords, London Bridge, Tower Bridge, the Palladium, Piccadilly, Leicester Square, and so on.

Matches were decidedly cheaper in those days. One label carries an advertisement that sixty boxes of the matches could be obtained for sixpence from Amos & Sons, Middlesbrough.

In 1897-98, Morelands (Gloucester) ran an ingenious match competition, with several money prizes, the first prize being £50. Models of the competitors’ choice had to be fashioned out of empty England’s Glory boxes. Among the marvels of ingenuity entered was a full-size piano made out of 3,756 matchboxes; the Laxey Wheel, Isle of Man, 6 feet high made out of 4,500 boxes; Forth Bridge, 10’ 6” long; Nelson’s Ship Victory passing a lighthouse; St. James’ Palace; and a tower with elevated railway. No fewer than 6,000 boxes were used in one model building, the sandpaper edges of the boxes forming the stone dressings of the building.

Some Famous and Infamous British Labels: Morelands issued an England’s Glory Wax Vesta in 1900, 6¼” long, contained in tin boxes, the empty tins being popular with school children as pencil boxes.

An aristocrat among matchboxes was the Bryant & May Royal Wax Vestas. These boxes, 6” long, were covered in blue velvet, with silver lettering. They also produced their Puck matches in 1912, introducing a new style of box with a luminous bottom, but for some reason the boxes were never put on the market commercially.

A short-lived label appeared in 1915, marked The Property of H.M. Office of Works. The appearance of this label caused so much indignation among members in the Houses of Parliament that the offending boxes were withdrawn.

Great indignation was also aroused when the “Jesus Christ” safety matches made their appearance in England, bearing a label showing the Crucifixion. Public meetings were held, preachers spoke on the subject from the pulpit, and eventually the label disappeared from circulation.