

Disk Matches

by
Mike Prero

“The ‘Disk’ Match is certainly a bright idea...54 safety matches cut in a disk which revolves in a container of metal, china or glass. ‘Disk’ Match Containers are in themselves beautiful, artistic, and ornamental. They



MATCH DISK CONTAINERS

No. 63 **1/-** **SELL THIS NOVEL AND UNIQUE FORM OF MATCH SERVICE TO YOUR CUSTOMERS!**
An excellent variety of really attractive designs now available from 1/-.

Model No. 63 (as illustrated), Oak design, for use in Kitchen, Hall, Bathroom, etc., retails at 1/-.
Model No. 73 (as illustrated), Round Brass Inlaid Design, for use in Smoke Rooms, Clubs, Hotels and Drawing Rooms, retails at 10/6.

An Excellent Advertising Medium.
Sell them and cultivate Match Sales.

No. 73 **10/6** **British DISK MATCHES Made**
Packed in Cartons, each containing ten disks of 54 matches per disk, retailing at 10½d. per carton. Encouraging terms to Wholesale & Retail Trade. Carriage and Cases Free. Finding a ready public favour when shown, DISK MATCHES are now an admitted live selling line by all Stores and leading Tobacconists.

WRITE FOR PARTICULARS TO-DAY!!
We also invite enquiries of terms for BOOK MATCHES and conditions of service for BOOK MATCH AUTOMATIC MACHINES.

BRITISH BOOKLET MATCHES (1928) LTD.
NEW RIVER WORKS, BRENTFIELD ROAD,
WILLESDEN, LONDON, N.W.10.

are produced in all kinds of designs from those suitable for luxurious apartments to those that hang on the wall by the cooker.” That was the description of Disk matches that appeared in an advertisement in the 1928 *The Tobacco Year Book*. The ad was placed by the British Booklet Matches (1928) Ltd., which had secured exclusive rights to the Disk match from its inventor, Felix Kappler, of Dresden, for a minimum annual royalty of £2,333.6.8d. The striking material was in the lid of the container, and the containers were in either metal, plastic, or possibly wood (I’m not certain about the wood, though). The plastic containers were a relatively late addition to varieties offered. Disk match cartons contained 540 matches and replacement strikers wrapped in tissue paper, enclosed in a white envelope.


Although the British Booklet Matches advertisement referred to above also states that Disk matches “have almost entirely supplanted the old fashioned-boxes”, a Bryant & May document entitled “British Booklet Matches 1928 Limited. Criticism of draft Prospectus”, dated March 26, 1928, shows that Bryant & May weren’t worried about the competition, stating that “Matches in large containers have been put on the market many times before, to prevent people putting boxes in their pockets, but the total sale has never reached any importance.”

A 1930 advertisement in *The Tobacco Year Book* shows model no. 03 in tinplate with printed “Oak design for use in Kitchen, Hall, Bathroom, etc.” and model no. 73, a “Round brass inlaid design, for use in Smoke Rooms, Clubs, Hotels and Drawing Rooms”, retailing at one shilling and ten shillings and sixpence, respectively. A carton of ten disks (540 matches) sold for 10½d, comparable with the usual charge of a penny for a box of wooden matches. [Alston, Stan, *Production by the smaller British Bookmatch companies with some imports for the British Market, 1895-1955*, ISBN 0 905111 05 2] Although British Booklet Matches had suggested early on that Disk


BRITISH BOOKLET MATCHES (1928) LTD.

Bond St Asprey London


**THE NOVELTY OF TO-DAY
AND NEED OF THE MOMENT.
ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW AT ASPREY'S.**




Silver, Engine-turned - 2.15.0
Plain - 2.7.6




Shagreen, with Silver mounts
5.10.0




Enamel on Silver - 5.7.6
on Silver-gilt 6.2.6




Rosewood, Ivory angled.
3.7.6




Walnut, Ivory angled.
2.17.6




Thuya Wood, Ivory angled.
3.10.0



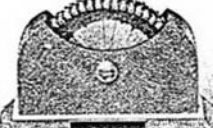
Crocodile, with Silver-mounted Glass
Ash Tray and Striker.
5.15.0




Oak, Metal-gilt mount.
1.15.0




Tortoiseshell, with Ivory Inlay.
5.15.0




Shagreen, with Ivory Inlay.
4.5.0
Shagreen only 3.15.0




Tortoiseshell and Brass Dish.
11.5.0



Chromium Plate, with Onyx Base,
Inlaid Canadian Lapis.
As illustrated.
3.0.0
Plain Onyx Base - 2.7.6



Quartered Walnut, with Metal-gilt Ash Trays.
7.12.6



Chromium Plate, with Shagreen Inlay.
2.7.6

WRITE for CATALOGUE.



Fig. 80

match containers would be perfect for companies to advertise on, Stan Alston, whose research I'm relying on here, reported that he had never seen any such containers with advertising.

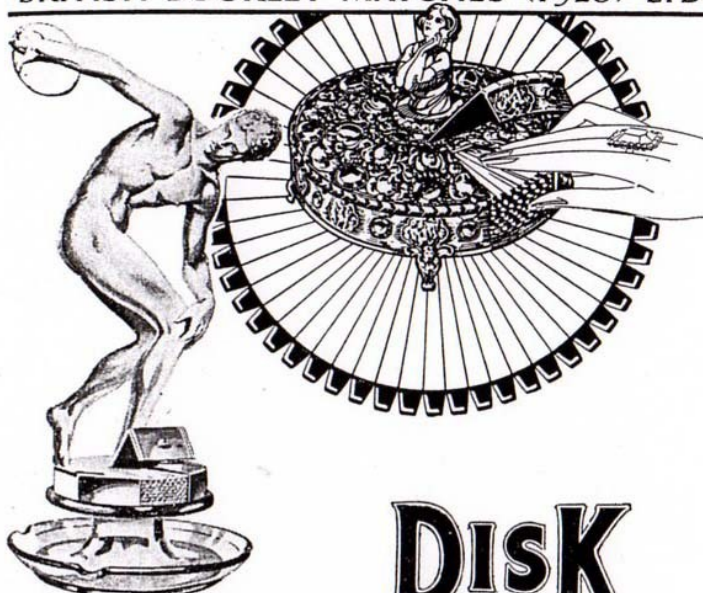
Hoping to raise money in North America, British Booklet Matches apparently approached Diamond Match Company in New York and perhaps a couple of other companies with little success. The newly formed Columbia Match Company of Canada Ltd. Near Montreal was then approached, but they were having problems of their own at the time. Despite these failures, British Booklet Matches took out four Canadian patents on Disk matches and their manufacture in 1928-29. [Alston, Stan...]

Given the times, the Disk match appeared to be a good idea, although, by their very nature, they were never going to replace the matchbox, simply because they weren't designed to be carried around in your pocket. And, Bryant & May turned out to be correct in their assessment. The Disk match never caught on either in Europe or here. It was the opinion of many people at the time that the containers were the real selling feature, not the matches, "for the latter never attained the popularity expected for them by the makers, and they remained 'The Novelty of To-Day' for just a few years." [Alston, Stan...]

A letter from J.H.C. Reed of Bryant & May, Ltd., London, dated November 28, 1930, stated "I think

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DISK
matches and
containers.


Sole Manufacturers:
British Booklet Matches (1928) Ltd.
NEW RIVER WORKS,
Brentfield Road, Willesden, N.W. 10.
Telephone: WILLESDEN 3354.



we can say quite definitely that these matches have been a failure in the country and in our opinion the only thing which sold the small quantities which have been sold was because the containers in which they were put up were often attractive and therefore suitable for Xmas presents.."

Unfortunately, the Depression was in full swing by the early 1930s, and British Booklet Matches was one of its many casualties. By December 31, 1931, the company was already £12,388 in the red. Bryant & May took the company over in March 1932. And, although some Disk matches were made by Bryant & May (or perhaps it was merely existing stock being sold off), the Disk match died an ignominious death. Today...it's history.

DISK MATCH STRIKING SURFACE
IS REVERSIBLE.
STRIKE LIGHTLY.
KEEP A SPARE.



(Cut with scissors to fit your Container.)
British Booklet Matches (1928) Ltd.,
New River Works, Brentfield Road,
Willesden, London, N.W.10.

All photos are from Stan Alston...