

HOBBY HISTORY

History of the Match: IV

[Ed. Note: keep in mind that this was probably written in the late 1940s]

By degrees, these dangers were eliminated. The too-ready ignition was greatly reduced, and in 1855 John Eduard Lundstrom, of Jonkoping, Sweden, produced a really satisfactory safety match., using a harmless red, or allotropic form, in place of the poisonous yellow phosphorus. This new substitute could only be used in the form of a safety match, the phosphorus being incorporated in the rubbing surface on the side of the box, not in the match head.

The British rights were immediately acquired by Francis May, of Bryant & May, and production of the new safety match was begun in England. Their use quickly became universal, and at least eighty percent of all matches manufactured today are safety matches.

Some lesser firms at this time continued to use the poisonous yellow phosphorus, which was not finally prohibited by law until 1910.

Two drawings of 1850 show a contrivance designed to protect match factory workers against the poisonous fumes. One drawing shows female matchbox fillers working with their hands thrust through tight-fitting sleeves into the interior of a glass case intended to confine the fumes; the other shows male workers with their heads enclosed in masks having glazed sight holes in front and a very high chimney on top to allow the descent of air from above the level of fumes.

The phosphorus poisoning was the greatest curse of the early match trade, the poisonous vapors, entering through cavities in the teeth, leading to the industrial disease known as 'Phossy Jaw'.

Pill-Boxes, Perfumed Match, Modern Strike-

Anywhere Match, and Waterproof Match

Pill-Box matches first made their appearance in 1865. These boxes were similar to the round boxes used for pills, hence their nickname.

They contained wax vestas, the lids bearing various gaily colored labels. These boxes were chiefly made for the Australian and New Zealand markets, where they caught the public fancy and are still as familiar to the Aussie as our own oblong boxes over here.

The miners at the gold diggings used them to store their gold dust (then a recognized means of barter on the gold field), or their sovereigns, the boxes being of the exact size to fit the latter.

In Blackwood's Diary of 1871 appears the only known event in which a British jury have publicly recommended a certain brand of match. A Plymouth tailor lost his life in a fire caused by playing with matches. The jury added a rider to their verdict, with which the coroner concurred, that they recommended the public to use Bryant & May special safety matches, which light only by friction on the box, blaming the cause of the fire on the strike-anywhere matches used in this particular home.

A popular match in grandma's young days was a double-headed Perfumed Match, introduced by Bryant & May, comprising glass sticks with scented heads which gave off a perfumed fragrance when ignited. In 1880, this firm also supplied matches known as "flamers", specially for use in lifeboats and approved by the Board of Trade. The box was enclosed in an outer tin case, hermetically sealed by soldering.

Ten years later, the Fuzee Vesta Match Company introduced double-headed matches for ordinary use, but they failed to catch the public fancy and died an early death.

It is also not generally known that the Salvation Army were registered as match manufacturers from 1890 to 1895, making and retailing their own branded matches.