

## THE HISTORY OF 'THE OLD CORNISH MINE' LABELS

By Mrs. I. M. Harris (No.985)

In the early 1960s research into Cornish mining was beginning to get under way and there was a tremendous interest in the old workings. Since mining was so typical of Cornwall Mr. David van der Plank felt this would prove a worthwhile subject for the Cornish Match Company's new venture and on 20th Sept. 1962 the first label issued by the firm of David & Rosemarie van der Plank of Halsetown, St. Ives, Cornwall went on sale on boxes of 'Finest Quality Foreign Matches'. These were produced in Russia and contained an average contents of 36 aspen sticks, impregnated for real safety and also damp proof. The multi-coloured picture on the box was by the St. Ives artist Eric Mason and portrayed the Rosemergy Mine at Morvah in 1885. The mine's engine house still exists and is on the coast road from St. Ives to St. Just.

The original printing of the label showed yellow at the top of the chimney stack but later was changed to red and a darker sky blue. No number was given to this label as it began as a single effort. However, people clamoured for more and so a series was decided upon and 'Rosemergy Mine' became known as No. 1. It is the only vertical label of this order. A packet and gross label circulated too. The packet label was of the same design as the one on the box but the gross label had a yellow background with suitable advertising in black print on  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the area, approximately  $10\frac{1}{2} \times 6$ ". The remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$  was reserved for putting the dozen size packet label on view.

The second label to appear depicted Dolcoath Mine, Camborne in 1890. The picture for this was taken from an old print found, whilst moving the counter in his shop, by a grocer in Dolcoath Road. On the face of this label was 'NO. 10 - Series of 50'. Other designs followed but were not numbered consecutively and, alas, the series was never completed. The subjects shown were not all Cornish mines but also events relating to Cornwall, such as 'Heroic'. This was taken from a picture in a local paper of the rescue scene when the 'Jeanne Gougy' was wrecked at Land's End in November 1962. This label appeared soon after the happening and was numbered '45'.

Other scenes recalled included 'Coach Leaving The Jamaica Inn for London 1821'. This was an artist's impression. A print loaned by the Falcon Hotel was used for 'S.W. Railway Coaches outside Falcon Hotel, Bude 1880'. 'Replacing The Logan Rock 1824' was taken from a picture found in a shop at Troon. 'The Two Pennies' are old Cornish tokens, one dated 1812 and the other 1811. The latter is very rare.

Slogans were printed on a number of labels of the 'Old Cornish Mine' series. Some examples were: 'Please keep me away from children'; 'Keep Cornwall tidy - don't throw me away'; 'Night drivers watch out for hedgehogs'; 'Please support Boy Scout Bob a Job Week 11th to 16th April 1966'.

As time passed the gross labels became larger versions of the packet size in place of the original advert label, whilst 12 boxes in a Souvenir Pack had an outside label with miniature replicas of the first seven pictures issued. Later another one had twelve pictures - nine of the 'Old Cornish Mine' series and three of the 'Old West Country' scenes. Other variants were six boxes of 'Mantel Piece' size. These contained an average of 450 matches and cost 2/-. The pictures were framed in red with a white border printed with details such as 'Economical, Extra Long, Foreign'. Six other pictures appeared too for the Mantel Piece size boxes. These also had a red frame but the white border with printing was omitted. Only the title of series, name of mine and series number showed on the face of the picture, whilst a black and white square sticker on the back of the box read 'Average Contents 430, Foreign Made'. Changes occurred too in the average contents of the ordinary matchbox, decreasing to 35 and then to 34 in the five years of circulation.

Most of the time the boxes were characterized by the red edges when seen in the shops, although they had no such colour when first launched. On the appended list will be noted three different labels as No. 41. One depicts 'The Wherry Mine In The Sea, Penzance' whereas the other two have identical pictures of 'Prince of Wales Shaft Phoenix United Mines Nr. Cheesewring-Caradon 1900'. But the difference lies in the border on the left hand side. One is printed 'Average 35 Damp-proof Aspen Sticks'. Having no country of origin this was a mistake and was not issued on the box. The other label numbered 41 is printed 'Average 34 Foreign Aspen Sticks' and

was the last 'Old Cornish Mine' label of this particular type to go on the market.

A penny box put in an appearance in 1967. This showed a picture of 'Mitchell's Winding Engine, East Pool Mine 1887' 'No. 1 Finest British Empire Made' with average contents 16 aspen sticks. The same design was carried on the dozen and gross labels except for '12 Penny Boxes' on the dozen packet label and '12 x 12 Penny Boxes' on the gross size. There was a banner across the top left hand corner saying 'Mr. Retailer, Please Display Me. If You Do I Sell Fast'. The labels I have already mentioned of this type were upright. There was also a horizontal label on the back of the box. This was white with black printing and among other things proclaimed 'Ideal for Ladies' Handbags and Gentlemen's Shirt Pockets'.

Incidentally, a letter by Mr. S. James, printed in the December 1974 'Newsletter' mentioned that he had two variants of No. 20 'Old Cornish Mine', i.e. av. contents 36 and 35. This is correct.

In the main each run of these different types of matches was in the region of half a million to a million boxes. Many colourful singles and sets have followed the series I have had the pleasure of recording and which, I hope, will interest matchbox label collectors and students of 'The Old Cornish Mine'.

Who knows what can be told about those other beautiful illustrations which adorn the matchboxes since produced by the Cornish Match Co. of Halsetown, C'wll?



THE "OLD CORNISH MINE" SERIES  
Complete list of those issued.

FOREIGN

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Av.Con.</u>	<u>Av.Con.</u>	<u>Av.Con.</u>	<u>Av.Con.</u>
1 (?)	Rosemergy	36	35	34	450
4	North Treskerby		35		430
5	Two Pennies	36	35	34	
9	South Crofty		35		
10	Dolcoath	36	35	34	450
11	Carn Camborne	36	35	34	450
12	Carn Brea	36	35		430
13	Fortescue's Shaft		35		430
17	Bottallack	36	35	34	450
18	Levant		35		
20	Swan Pool	36	35		430
25	Wheal Friendly		35		430
27	Hayle	36	35	34	450
29	Jamacia Inn		35		
30	Falcon Hotel	36	35		
36	Frank's Shaft		35		
41	The Wherry	35			430
41	Prince of Wales	35 (Not printed "Foreign")			
41	Prince of Wales	(Printed "Foreign")	34		
45	Heroic	36	35	34	450
46	Logan Rock		35		

Av.Con.

A PENNY BOX APPEARED OF -

"THE OLD CORNISH MINE" ( British Empire Made ) No.1, Mitchell's Winding Engine 16