

Nigel's Webspac News

A newsletter distributed by Nigel's Webspac, a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

Happy New Year!

Another year passes, racking up 15 years for Nigel's Webspac on the internet. How much longer can I find interesting things to talk about for the 15 year period from 1965/66 to 1979/80? That partly depends on my readers, what you are interested in, and what you tell me or send me. A lot of what I discover and am able to publish comes from my readers, fellow collectors and social historians, so I am always grateful and like to reflect at the end of each year on the support and encouragement I get through my website and newsletters. A big thank you!

The role of the Newsletter

In my last Newsletter I reflected on the fact that Nigel's Webspac is now on Facebook, which gives me a chance for frequent (mostly daily) updates, immediate feedback on what people like to see and read, and the opportunity for readers to comment on and add to the social history. As a result I questioned the role of my newsletters. I received some feedback from readers who choose not to read Facebook and asked that the Newsletter continue, and so it will. For readers of my Facebook page you may see many similarities as I plan to repeat a number of popular Facebook posts through my two-monthly Newsletter editions. However, there will always be new material in these Newsletters that you will not be able to read on Facebook as it allows for longer articles and more in-depth analysis.

A&BC Chewing Gum and the Master Vending Company

A lot of the recorded social history for football cards and stickers from 1965/66 to 1979/80 comes from the cards, stickers and their associated albums. Other material comes from people's memories, some from trade catalogues, and some from associated items like posters and wrappers. As time passes these sources become exhausted, so it is good to have other sources that we can turn to either for new information or to remind ourselves of what we may have forgotten. One such source is old trade magazines.

41—THE WORLD'S FAIR, SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 1958

It's Magic

NEW "MAGIC" BALL GUM BEWITCHES KIDS, BOOSTS SALES!

Remember, when you were a child, how you loved to try something new; how sudden "oranges" swept the whole neighbourhood? We're happy to announce that children haven't changed one iota, and that is why we have taken Top Quality Gum and added a little "Magic" that is guaranteed to give your sales a "shot in the arm" without extra cost to yourself.

New colour gimmick sells faster!

Magic Ball Gum is our latest and greatest line. By chewing more than one Ball Gum together, the children can actually change continuously the colour of the bubbles they blow. It is real fun and young customers will soon be back for a "repeat order" to make MORE colours.

NEW MAGIC BALL GUM COSTS NO MORE THAN A & B C TOP QUALITY GUM 2/6 per lb. (110 Count)

Available from

MASTER VENDING MACHINE CO. LTD.
82/106 Cricklewood Lane,
London, N.W.2.
Tel.: GLA 6695.

A & B C CHEWING GUM LTD.

The Master Vending Machine Co. Ltd., Estate House, 29, Waterloo St., Birmingham, 2.
The Master Vending Machine Co. Ltd., 151, West Regent Street, Glasgow, C.2.
Westwick Automatics Co. Ltd., Westwick House, East Street, Leeds, 9.
Westwick Automatics Co. Ltd., 2, Little Peter Street, Manchester, 2.
South Western Automatics Co., 15, Cumberland Street, Bristol, 2.
Also through: A & B C CHEWING GUM LTD., 1, Carlisle Road, London, N.W.9.

Top quality—for constant custom

This new A & B C ball gum is the same superior gum used in Top Quality, and that's important to an operator who wants to maintain a high level of sales. Children are surprisingly shrewd judges of sweets and gum. If they don't get satisfaction they'll spend their pennies elsewhere.

Special sticker shouts the news!

We have prepared a bright "eye-catching" five-coloured sticker to fix on every machine where Magic Ball Gum is used. Mention how many machines you have when placing your order, which we hope will be right now from your area distributor. The sooner you fill up with Magic Ball Gum, the sooner you will see Magic in your sales.

Alan sent me this advertisement from The World's Fair, a trade magazine, edition dated April 1958. It features 'Magic' Ball Gum, produced by A&BC Chewing Gum Ltd. via the Master Vending Machine Co. Ltd.

The advertisement makes it clear that A&BC Chewing Gum made the gum, while the Master Vending Machine Co. distributed the vending machines.

The relationship between A&BC and Master Vending is an

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interesting one. I came across this article on the web which may help to explain it:

"In 1956 Topps in the USA, released the 66 card Elvis set in 1¢ and 5¢ packs under the pseudo name Bubbles, Inc. Anxious to expand distribution and after several years of negotiation, Topps licensed the card set to A&BC Gum Company to be manufactured and distributed in the UK.

At that time (the late 50s), A&BC was not producing larger "baseball size" cards with gum slabs, wrappers and packs as was typical in the US. They lacked the technology to do so and the process was considered quite expensive. Smaller A&BC cards were issued in tobacco packets or food packages and beginning in 1958, their larger cards were issued using A&BC owned gumball machines. You inserted a pence or two coin into the machine at your neighbourhood card/candy store and out came a card and a gumball. But A&BC had mechanical problems with their machines and soon after their Elvis set was released (in 1959), A&BC sold their gumball/card machines to The Master Vending Company who in short order went bankrupt.

Soon thereafter, A&BC began manufacturing and distributing their larger cards in gum packs. As such, and given the method of distribution, there are no known wrappers or packs for the A&BC UK "sister set" of the US '56 Elvis card set. Because A&BC used a slightly different manufacturing process than in the States, the UK cards are just a bit larger (95mm x 67mm) than their US counterpart (88mm x 64mm). In late 1958, A&BC moved their manufacturing facility from Cricklewood to Colindale in North London. At the time (as the story goes), given the new relocated manufacturing facility, there was concern about the quality of the A&BC Elvis cards, especially the Elvis image on the front. Whether these were concerns of the Topps brass, the A&BC brass or the printer is lost to history. In any event, prior to the release of the A&BC cards, several runs of the Elvis images with blank backs were printed as proof sets. These cards were machine cut for examination"

This article comes from the website reference - <http://www.elvisechoesofthepast.com/hmv-meets-rca-victor-rare-hm-sheet-music/> - and raises as many questions as it answers. The quote is taken from a post on the webpage from a user called 'Harry Carrigan' and is dated April 2013. Mr Carrigan says that his information is 'an extract from an article from a magazine that specialises in Topps and A&BC cards', but does not name the magazine.

The article suggests that A&BC sold their gum and card machines to Master Vending. In [Newsletter Edition 5](#), dated May 2010, I told a story about this relationship based on the recollections of Douglas and Tony Coakley, founders of A&BC Chewing Gum: 'Douglas recalls that he bought a machine which could vend a piece of ball gum and three picture cards. He then sold the machine to Master Vending who, in turn, contracted A&BC Chewing Gum to produce the ball gum and print their cards (hence the box to send the gum and cards). Tony Coakley remembers that the blank cards used by Master Vending were last year's spares from A&BC Chewing Gum, although he also remembers that there were problems with the machines dispensing the gum and cards. Douglas Coakley remembers that Master Vending went into liquidation, but fortunately at the time there were no debts owed to A&BC Chewing Gum. How fortunate we are to have Douglas and Tony still able to remember these little tales!'



Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this story is the suggestion that A&BC Chewing Gum's problems with gum vending machines, and the difficulties of the Master Vending Machine Co. changed their approach from distributing their gum via gum ball machines to 'gum packs' i.e. flat gum in wrappers rather than ball gum. The inclusion of cards within the gum wrappers signalled the start of the good times for A&BC and for football card collectors. The 1958/59 set of A&BC Chewing Gum Footballers was the start of 15 years' worth of super collectible football card productions.

Until next time...**Nigel**