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## The Top 20 British Enamel Signs

Information courtesy of Christopher Baglee & Andrew Morley – co founders of The Street Jewellery Society

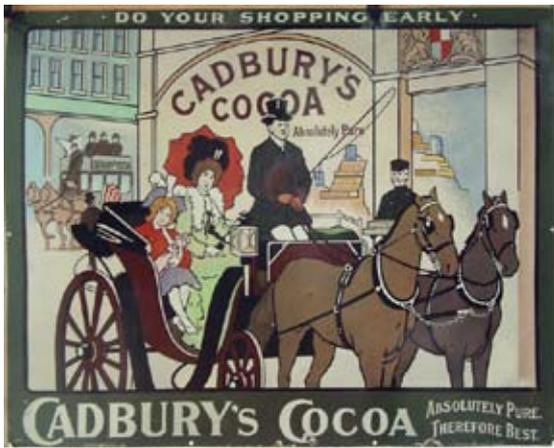
Product	Manufacturer	Known as	Date/Origin
Tobacco	Churchman	Churchman's Tortoiseshell	c.1900
Cocoa	Cadbury	Cadbury's Iandau	c.1905 Falkirk Iron Co.
Boot Polish	Cherry blossom	Cherry Blossom Boy	c.1890
Tobacco	Ogden	St Julien Officer & Gentlemen	c.1910
Anti-Fouling	Holzapfel	Holzapfel's Compositions	c.1910
Toilet soap	Swan	Swan White Floating Soap	c.1905
Oil Engine	Blackstone	Blackstone's Oil Engine	c.1920
Carpet soap	Chivers	Chivers' Carpet Soap	c.1910
Tea	Mazawattee	Mazawattee Tea Leaf	c.1905
Metal polish	Matchless	Matchless Gladiatrix	c.1900
Bicycle	Rudge-Whitworth	R-W Family on Bikes	c.1900 Imperial Enamel Co.
Chocolate	Fry	Fry's 5 Boys (coloured)	c.1905 Chromographic Co.
Soap	Lever Bros	Sunlight Soap Boy	c.1900 Chromographic Co.
Soap	Hudson	Hudson's Balloon	c.1900 Chromographic Co.
Cocoa	Van Houten	Van Houten's 2 tins & blue ribbon	c.1900 Falkirk Iron Co.
Dyeing	Pullar	Pullar's Gothic Frame	c.1890
Tobacco	Wills	3 Castles Dockside engraving	c.1910
Sauce	Burma	Burma Sauce	c.1905
Insurance	British Dominions	British Dominions £000	c.1920
Cocoa	Fry	Fry's Burglars	c.1910 Stanton & Hulme Ltd



### Churchman's Tortoiseshell

A vintage example comprising all the elements that make an enamel sign into a work of art. The over-all style is classic Art Nouveau, epitomised by elegant typefaces, sinuously portrayed flowers, the whole design drenched in 'greenery-gallery' colour combinations with the layout achieved through visually satisfying symmetry. The central area contains a depiction of the product being advertised which in itself is a classic example of trompe-l'oeuil lithographic print, faithfully rendered in the enamelling.

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### Cadbury's Landau

The very epitome of 'every picture being worth 1000 words', the only written messages here, "do your shopping early", "Cadbury's Coca" and "Absolutely Pure Therefore Best" avoid being superfluous by being suggestive and specific in equal measure. The design, though without firm attribution, may be by JW Simpson (of P&R Hay dyers/French cleaners fame) or a similar jobbing designer in the Beggarstaff/Beardsley tradition. The choice of colours avoids the usually favoured primaries, opting instead for the rarely used secondary, tertiary and pastel palette. The composition is remarkable for its cropped imagery redolent of the then cutting edge methods of the Impressionists, themselves influenced by the exoticism of Japanese prints and the 'snapshot' style of fledgling photography. Within the advert of other adverts, on the bus, the shop window and the packaging.



### Cherry Blossom

Social comment, self-referential symbolism, word play, trompe-l'oeil and subtle product placement all play their part in this distinguished example of street jewellery. The life size Edwardian schoolboy, a slate (sporting an advertising slogan) slung over shoulder, is engaged in the world's least offensive act of vandalism – adding a chalked caption in fine calligraphy to the 'official' advert painted on the bricks. His pocket bulges with a tin of his favoured brand of boot polish, which he uses to earn 'pocket-money by shoe shining after school.



### Ogden's St Juliens

So confident were the Ogden's advertising executives of the impact on the public of their campaign that they felt able to omit the manufacturer's name on this splendid sign; the familiar Ogden livery of primary colours plus the product brand name sufficed. As an example of masterly enamelled chromolithography this sign is unequalled. The skin tones, fabrics and feathers employ upwards of 16 separate colours, with illusionistic half tones overprinted.



### Holzappfel Marine Anti-Fouling

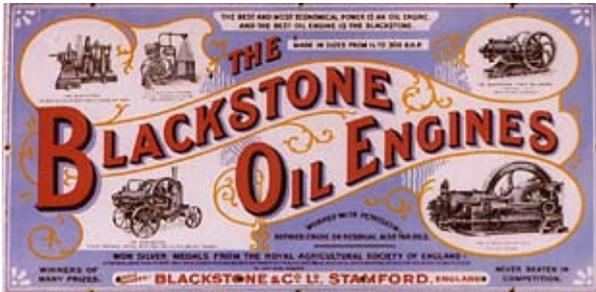
No doubt Cassandre's 'Normandie' of 1935 is the last word in poster art depicting full-frontal ocean liners, but Holzappels Compositions, which preceded it by more than 20 years, deserves a place in advertising history for its early dramatic use of steep perspective and close-cropped, tightly focussed imagery.

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### Swan Toilet Soap

Another art nouveau treasure, once more keeping slogans to the absolute minimum. The combination of white with two shades of blue and a delicate grey are all that is necessary to project a richly salubrious atmosphere.



### Blackstone Oil Engine

How to make clunky smelly machines romantic? Use sky-blue, blood-red and marigold-yellow in a confection of sub-art nouveau swirls, cartouches and marine squiggles blazing out the main message (the product title) amid a plethora of tiny captions giving the closely detailed information demanded by the manufacturer, so small that the overall design remains an uncompromised triumph.



### Chivers' Carpet Soap

'Before and after' images have been a staple of selling imagery for centuries – in every medium from newspaper to television – but rarely in enamel. This is a classic example of the genre, boasting too a price, a claim to royal patronage, technical information and jingoistic assertions of superior quality. The use of primary red yellow and blue with masterly use of blocked white and delicately detailed black drawing is peerless.



### Mazawattee Tea Leaf

Marshall McLuhan's iconic aphorism "the medium is the message" might have been coined to describe this sign. The shape of the sign is appropriately a cut-out leaf inscribed with the mock Hindi trade name invented to include a homonym of the product. The freedom of typography available to enamel sign designers is exemplified by the letters A, T and E each repeat of which is subtly different.



### Matchless Gladiatrix Metal Polish

For nationalistic rabble rousing spleen, there can be few equals to this astonishing advert. We are in the gladiatorial arena, where Britannia as a gladiatrix has just slain her foreign (read German) foe, shielded by that Great British product Matchless Metal Polish. And all this when the First World War was still over a decade in the future; trade wars knew no boundaries, even then!



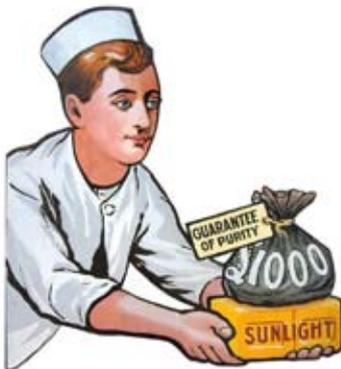
### Rudge-Whitworth Bicycles

Could family life, Edwardian style, be better depicted than in this classic enamel? Note that the middle class credentials of the cycling family are reinforced by the depiction of the working class appearance of the villagers toiling in their cottage garden, while the wealthy townies glide by with total self confidence. Note the enamel sign with this enamel sign (for a cycling club) on the garden wall. Full colour, royal warrants, prices, a fine slogan and top of the range illustration; enamel sign perfection



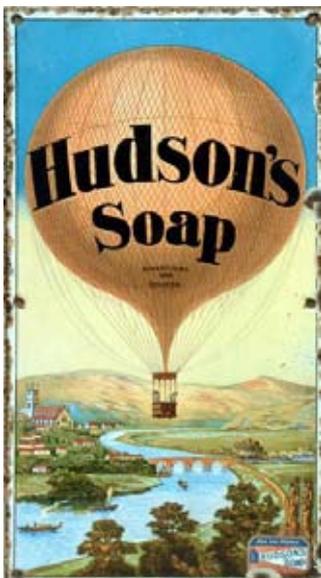
### Fry's Five Boys Chocolate

A most nostalgia sign for many collectors, for a product that 'our generation' could still enjoy until the mid 1960s. Very nice early use of hand drawn lithographic images in the colour versions and rare, early use of photographic lithography on the b&w versions. The newly invested cinema and comic strip are both imitated here with a sequence of images telling the story of a distressed child being gradually calmed and cheered up with the promise then present of his favourite chocolate.



### Sunlight Soap Boy

One of the best 'cut-out' signs and one of the earliest. The very appealing image is of a brawny factory boy offering, on a block of Sunlight soap, a guarantee of purity plus a potential "reward" of 1,000 pound. Either left or right facing, this is a MUST for every collection.



### Hudson's Soap Balloon

Such a delicate illustration in such detail, this was then only way to fly, with a view only seen by the lucky few. It must have been an amazing image for its time, suggesting that the product was the result of leading edge technology. Note that here too there is an enamel sign (lower right) illustrated within the overall design.



### Van Houtens Cocoa

Unusual colour combination for enamel – brown and white plus a pale bluey violet. Note the with lovely Victorian script lettering taking the larger part of the whole, with further fine fonts on the ornate swags and on the delicately detailed tins. At 15” x 6”, a conveniently collectible size; the thick, heavy enamel is typical of Falkirk Iron Co. signs.



### Pulars' Dye Works

It is tempting to go for illustrated signs as ‘the best’; to do so is to ignore the vast majority of enamels that were lettering only, and some of these brilliant examples of advertising typography. The Pullars’ is a wonderful combination of typeface and colour in a simple design subsequently much-imitated by other dye companies. A rare bonus with this sign is the very gothic, attractive arts & crafts part-gilded, dark, wooden frame.



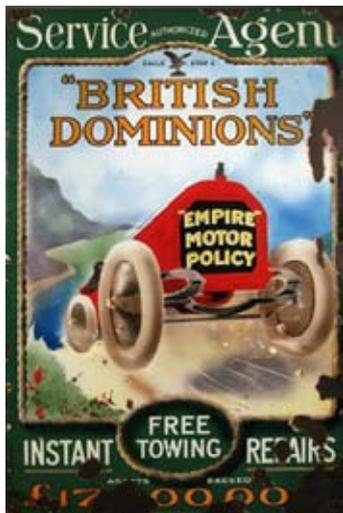
### Wills Three Castles

A very attractive image achieved by imitating the steel engraving advertisements and tobacco wrappers of the sailing ship ear of the illustration. The black yellow and green livery and stylish font imitate precisely those of the cigarette packet, thus promoting and upholding the product’s trading identity. This sign is often double-sided, so two for the price of one.



### Burma Sauce

A cheeky image and slogan, bold colours and design; a great combination for any successful advertisement. Signs that include an illustration of the product (in this case the sauce bottle with its ornate label) are always favourites.



### British Dominions Motor Insurance

This is one of the best 'action' shots captured in enamel and is also a fantastic image of a racing car, even more powerful because of the dimensions of the sign (60" x 41"). A must have sign for 'petrolheads'.



### Fry's Cocoa Burglars

One or more of several series of Edwardian postcard/magazine insert advertisements were reproduced as enamel signs, including Tom Browne's 'So near' and "One touch of nature", John Hassall's Nestle's 'fat cat, thin cat' the two Morses distemper signs and this – the rarest of the rare, the Fry's Burglars.