

A BLOCKED NOSE CAN BE A MOTIVATION

SNIFFLES AND SNUFF

by Sonia Roberts

With the onset of the cough and sneeze season most stockists experience an upturn in their snuff sales. The fact that a 'quick pinch' can provide relief from the stuffed-up feeling that is so often the last stage of a head cold is often the motivation for a customer who's never perhaps previously thought seriously about snuff to make a trial. And provided the stockist concerned can offer the proper kind of service and point of sale back-up the possibility that the casual customer can be turned into a regular user is very strong indeed.

'The secret of selling more snuffs is surely to show more,' says Vivian Rose of G Smith & Sons, London. Over recent years they have experienced a steady upturn in mail order sales of snuffs of all types and Mr Rose is firmly convinced that many customers who are now ordering by post could in fact get their requirements nearer to home, but they don't realise that their local tobacconist stocks snuff because they never see it on his counter.

'Obviously we're very happy to have this extra trade, not only from all over the UK, but overseas as well,' Mr Rose continues, 'but equally we'd like to be able to supply more stores with snuffs for retail re-sale.'

Unlike many commodities within the specialist tobacconist and CTN merchandise ranges, it is possible to offer a comprehensive collection of snuffs without tying up big sums of

capital, nor do snuffs need a large area of display space, but the effect of being able to offer the consumer a reasonable choice is almost always that the customer who came in for just one tin walks out with two, three or four.

'Most customers who aren't already familiar with snuff are most agreeably surprised that it is so reasonably priced and are therefore prepared to indulge themselves with several flavours,' says Mr Rose.

MEDICATED

'As far as we are concerned, because we are recognised as specialists in snuff, there is no major upturn in sales in the autumn for us although there is a slight movement in favour of medicated qualities.

'For the stockist looking to provide a collection which offers a reasonable range of medicated types with a snuff to appeal to a wide range of tastes I would suggest that what is needed is a quartet of snuffs from our collection which would include Special Menthol, Cardinal Menthol, Old London (which is a mild snuff) and White Cardinal (which blends pine and pure menthol fragrances).'

At Illingworth's it is the snuffs which are the winning line for winter, although once again Mr Christopher Musson believes that a stockist who can sell snuff well, can sell it well round the year.

'Our principal lines in the Dr Rumney series are Mentholypus,



Britain's strongest man, Geoff Capes helped to promote Hedges L260 Snuff at major athletic events last year. Here he signs for David Whatley.

Export and Dr Rumney Plus which adds aniseed to the basic menthol fragrance' Mr Musson continues. 'And we are happy to say that after our disastrous fire last February we are now back in full production on all these popular lines — in fact we caught up with our home trade orders by May last year, and had brought exports up to date again by July.'

Next stage on the Illingworth rehabilitation programme will be a return to their former plant. 'We are now at the planning stage and if all goes well with building schedules we hope to be operating from our old address, instead of in our present temporary units, sometime next year,' Mr Musson told *Tobacco*.

While it has been a difficult year for Illingworth's, although they've triumphantly overcome their difficulties, at Permafex business in '83 has been particularly buoyant.

'Regarding the seasonality of snuff sales it is usually expected that as the temperature rises sales will dip, but despite the heatwave summer we enjoyed in '83 there was no evidence at all of a decline in snuff sales,' Mr D G Whatley told *Tobacco*. 'Indeed analysis of our third quarter of the year



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figures show that there was actually an increase of sales in August. This could well have been attributable to hay fever — and this statistic suggests that promotions related to months in which the pollen count soars could pay off in other years too. The immediate effect from our point of view has been bonus business in September and October as traders who regularly carry snuff, topped up stocks depleted by the August rush', comments Mr Whatley.

He describes sales of his company's Hedges snuffs as being 'particularly lively throughout the year' and attributes much of the success to the efforts made by Permaflex distributors to get their products accepted nationwide.

'We believe that 82 per cent of all tobacconists now carry Hedges L260', says Mr Whatley, 'and I believe that tobacconists generally are now taking snuff much more seriously. This appreciation of snuff as an important sector of the tobacco trade overall has been a notable business trend in the USA for the last couple of years. Over in the States there has been particular interest in what they call, "dried snuffs" which are our English style varieties and which appeal most strongly to the younger consumer.'

On the export front Mr Whatley has had a particularly encouraging response both in the USA and in Europe to his recently introduced Beau Brummell line. 'The Americans particularly seem to like not only the presentation of this line but also the quality of the contents of the packs', says Mr Whatley.

'Fluffy' is the adjective they most often use to describe Beau Brummell and from their point of view that's a mark of true appreciation.

Another snuff manufacturer enthusiastic about '83 sales, is Joseph and Henry Wilson Ltd.



'Although sales have been good throughout '83 we shall certainly be looking for a further upturn during the last quarter of the year,' says Mr GW Jones. 'Undoubtedly a large number of people find that snuffs give relief from the symptoms of a number of winter ailments. Orders for our medicated No 99 brand are particularly strong at present. This is, I believe, as a result of a recent extensive advertising and sampling campaign.'

I think we score so heavily during the medicated snuffs season because we have such an interesting variety of these products.'

The current leader is Medicated 99, but Finest Menthol, Extra Strong Menthol and Dr Craig 27 are also very



popular.

Mr Jones adds that 'Kensington', which comes in a shaker pack, originally developed primarily to appeal to customers in the USA and

on the continent is also gaining considerable ground in the home market.

'Having said this, however, sales of SP type snuffs, particularly SP No 1 and Top Mill No 1 are also doing well, as are the perfumed varieties,' Mr Jones continues. 'Within the perfumed sector Jockey Club, Wallflower and Otto de Rose are the leaders.'

'As regards pack sizes, pocket tins are still the public's favourite form of presentation, but we are finding that airtight tins are now showing a steady increase in sales.'

Good response to their new presentation of snuff in clip top plastic packs — as announced in *Tobacco* earlier this year — is also reported by McChrystals Ltd of Leicester. 'Obviously it is early days yet, but the take up of the half dozen lines now offered in the new style containers has been most encouraging' says Mr DR McChrystal, the group's managing director.

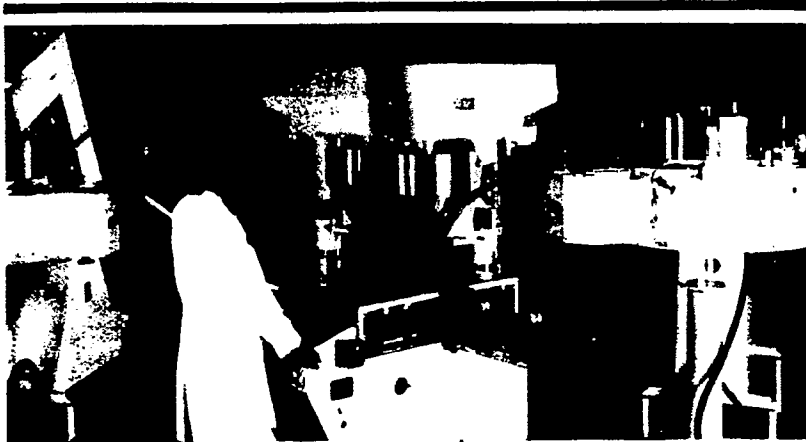
Mr McChrystal is also finding that exports world wide are as encouraging as the state of the home trade. 'And while we are obviously always eager to make added sales we don't really see snuff as in any way a product subject to seasonal peaks and troughs. As far as we are concerned it is a good year round seller,' he comments.

While McChrystals are doing especially well exporting, at Gawith Hoggarth & Co Ltd, imported lines are helping to boost UK snuff sales, which must be a sure sign that snuff taking is internationally popular.

Bright point of sales aids including a colourful booklet giving the background to German style snuffs generally is an extensive part of the Pöschl package which Gawith Hoggarth are now offering to their customers.

Managing director Mr GW Gawith told *Tobacco*, 'We believe that the Pöschl Snuff Shop counter dispenser is one of the best sales aids of its type currently available in the UK. It is compact and eye catching yet at the same time has done much to give snuff a more upmarket image. Meanwhile the modern design of the packs themselves have made an appeal to the younger snuff taker who we find is particularly attracted by the mild qualities.'

'Most of these snuffs are medicated to some degree' he continues; 'Harvard is flavoured with aniseed, President with eucalyptus and the Apricot and



To those who still think of snuff as the last bastion of traditional tobacco processing techniques, our picture may come as a shock.

It shows the new Alite high speed system which is filling over 7,000 5g snuff boxes an hour at J H Wilson's Sheffield plant.

Built by Paxall of Letchworth it sorts, and puts the box bases the right way round before rolling the lids onto the filled bases.

The system has, the makers say, doubled output and halved the work force needed.

Illingworth's of Kendal

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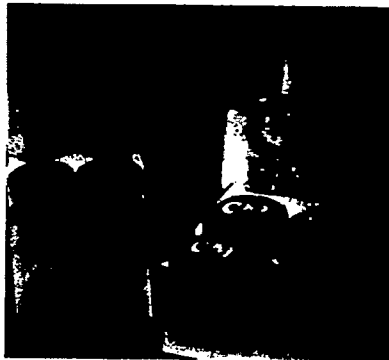
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Raspberry varieties are self descriptive.

'For customers who want a straight snuff we recommend Gletcherprise, while for connoisseurs of the unusual, White has the distinction of being a snuff which is *not* tobacco based.'

In home produced brands too, Gawith Hoggarth are finding a trend, particularly pronounced among younger snuff takers toward the milder types and toward 'fancy' flavours. They also regard menthol snuffs as being generally responsible for wooing new customers to the snuff habit. 'The fresh, sharp characteristics of menthol has undoubtedly helped over the years to attract more consumers to snuff taking' comments Mr Gawith.

'Our experience is that once the colder, damper, autumn weather begins, the demand for such snuffs does increase sharply. However I think at the moment, quite apart from the re-entry into the market of consumers who are simply seeking to relieve cold and sinus symptoms, we are seeking an increased interest in snuff taking generally. At the moment our most popular brand is CM which is a medicated snuff. The CM of the title stands for camphor and menthol,' Mr Gawith explains. 'We believe that one reason why this snuff sells so well is that it is neither "too strong" nor yet "too mild" and therefore appeals to the widest possible spectrum of potential



consumers.

'As consumers become more "snuff minded" generally they often want to "move on" to the strong types and recommendation in such circumstances would be our Spartan which has both menthol and eucalyptus flavouring. But we would urge all potential stockists to offer as wide a range as they can and we believe that CM and Spartan should be complemented by lines such as Lakeland, which has an aromatic quality, and other medicated blends with speciality flavourings. Our present selection includes lines with whisky, aniseed, and peppermint additives.'

Mr Harris, managing director of Samuel Gawith Ltd, is another of those who can see an increase in sales over the winter for such medicated

brands as Kendal Brown and Menthol varieties, but he was less enthusiastic about the effect of a long hot summer which did not help Samuel Gawith's mid-year sales.

He believes his personal snuff taking is not only an aid with colds and sinus trouble, he finds it helps with his headaches too.

Can snuffs really chase away colds and sneezes as some enthusiasts claim?

'It is difficult to produce evidence of the kind which would stand up in a court of law, but it is my genuine belief that we snuff takers suffer less from the intolerable miseries caused by the common cold,' comments Mark Chaytor, managing director of Wilsons & Co (Sharrow).

And while his snuffs seem to sell equally well all around the year, perhaps stockists eager to boost sales of his wares could do worse than quote the words of the 18th century maker, Mr Rowley. He wrote of his favourite snuff: 'It is remarkable for the cure of headache, weakness of the sight, deafness, palsies and apoplexies. It opens and cleanses the nostrils and glands when they get clogged and obstructed. It is moreover recommended by her Grace Charlotte, Duchess of Somerset, and many other respectable personages.'

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