

Behind the Bow Windows

A booklet produced by Fribourg & Treyer at the Sign of the Rasp & Crown, 34 Upper End of Haymarket, London, SW1. Whitehall 1305



SNUFF arouses the curiosity of many people. Maybe it links their thoughts with the romantic age of the stage coach, the powdered wig and the dandy. Be that as it may, it is true to say that a snuff salesman is asked a host of questions about his stock - how it is made, who takes it and why.

Fribourg & Treyer, for 240 years vendors of the highest quality snuff, in their historic, bow-windowed shop in the Haymarket, can help with a few answers.

Snuff is produced from a mixture of tobacco leaf and stalk which has been fermented by a salt solution, the amount of which is small and strictly controlled by law. After some weeks' fermentation the "cure" is ground in a mill and perfumed. That is all.

There are two kinds. Moist, made from leaves and stalks, which includes such varieties as Princes, Kendal Brown, Rappee and the like; and Dry, made principally from stalk, such as the well-known S.P., High Dry Toast and Dutch.

Briefly that is the story, but of course there is more to it than that. The charm of snuff is the result of expert blending and the experienced use of subtle perfumes such as Bergamot, Attar of Roses, and Jasmin. With Fribourg & Treyer's as with other leading snuff houses, the recipes used in their world-famous blends are a trade secret known only to the head of the firm and passed on from one generation to another.

Tastes in snuff are individual, as much so as for wine. A salesman can advise, of course, about strength and bouquet, nevertheless it is the customer himself, by sampling different kinds, who makes the final decision.

Although snuff-taking today is common to all classes, ages, and to both sexes, it is interesting to note that certain trades and professions are the most consistent users. Many churchmen, lawyers, doctors, writers and actors are valued friends of the snuff trade. Tailors and printers too, from a tradition connected with their trades, swell the ranks of those who "like a pinch".

Why do people take snuff? For the same reason that

others smoke; in short, to enjoy the solace that good tobacco, wisely used, provides for the comfort of mankind. There are others who, on medical advice, find in snuff a pleasant prophylactic against colds, or



relief in certain kinds of nasal congestion.

Some of Fribourg & Treyer's famous brands are described in the following pages:

Asthoroath.

Since most snuff takers are inquiring folk - and why not, for to learn is to live - they will be interested to know why this snuff, suggested by Dr. James Robertson Justice, is so very different from any other yet produced. In the first place it has an entirely new base, as the tobacco used comes from Latakia, the ancient Laodicea of the Bible. The actual plant is tiny, only a few inches high in fact, and the whole of it used - excluding, of course, the roots.

The rich dark colour and distinctive tarry flavour are derived from the method of curing. For no less than six months the tobacco is smoked over fires of the Asiatic oak, the ozer. The orient also suggested jasmin as the right perfume for this exotic snuff and the combination may well remind those who have journeyed in the East, either in person or by means of the printed word, of those other oriental delights the jasmin-scented tea of China and the dark roast Turkish coffee.

Bordeaux.

A popular mixture of medium strength and mill. A blend of moist and dry snuffs retaining the virtues of both. Piquant and refreshing, it never cloys and is a favourite with the heavy user.

Bureau.

An interesting mixture, a survival of earlier days when the art of snuff-blending invited experiments in much

the same way that cocktail mixing has in recent years. The recipe calls for no fewer than six varieties of snuff and their union produces a most pleasant whole.

Dieppe.

Brown, most and of medium mill, this delicate and fragrant snuff appeals to the discerning connoisseur. One of the ideal after-dinner blends.

Etrenne.

This newcomer to our snuff list has the pleasant aroma of carnation. The inclusion of some dry, fine milled snuff in the base content supplies that extra piquancy desired by many snuff users.

F. & T. Menthol.

A medicated snuff in which the best obtainable ingredients are blended with a soft base.

French Carotte.

Snuff blending allows for infinite variety, since the many bases and well-nigh limitless perfumes give the expert ample scope for experiment. Sometimes, a happy combination of ingredients is arrived at with gratifying results. This happened with French Carotte.

As a mixture it is new but the components were in use over two centuries ago. In earlier time the word "Carotte" meant the roll of tobacco from which snuff users grated their own; today it names one of the finest bases, smooth and retentive, deserving only the best of perfumes.

One such is sandalwood oil which is distilled from the aromatic wood of a small evergreen tree grown in the East, and has a delicate non-cloying aroma faintly suggestive of incense. Combining these select ingredients has produced a charming snuff of unique distinction.

High Dry Toast.

Of Irish origin, this unique snuff has a niche of its own among the dry kinds. Superfine, almost powdery in mill it has a strange nutty flavour of deceptive strength. It is the lightest of all snuffs in colour. Though not of universal popularity, its followers are a staunch and conservative body. Like Elia's Roast Pork, the forerunners of this variety were discovered by accident, when the tobacco burned in a Dublin factory was sold to be consumed as snuff.

Jasmin.

Although two world wars, modernization, and the conquest of distance by air and radio have lessened, yet not entirely banished, the romance of the East, it is well to remember that many of our sweet-smelling flowers first came from there.

Jasmin - from the Persian *Yasmin* - is one and Fribourg & Treyer used its alluring perfume with good effect on a base of largely Havana content in producing this snuff.

This blend of East and West is mildly piquant and satisfying.

Kendal Brown.

An attractive, deep brown mixture of the moist class, coarse-milled and pleasantly perfumed. Could be regarded as the fruity port among snuffs. It has a select band of patrons of unswerving loyalty. A satisfying snuff having its origins in the John Peel country.

Light Dutch.

Dry, fine-milled, and more or less neutral in character, this snuff has a charm of its own for the user who prefers a plain blend without perfume. Light Dutch deserves more support than it receives, since the quality is undoubtedly there.

Macouba.

A most, brown snuff of medium mill and strength. As firm a favourite today as it was with the Regency bucks. Has characteristics entirely its own. This snuff is mentioned in Thackeray's *Pendennis* and may well have suggested to Dickens the name of his famous character, Mr. Micawber. It is interesting to note that this delicious snuff is still perfumed with pure Bulgarian attar of roses as it was one hundred and fifty years ago.

Masulipatam.

A coarse-milled, more or less unscented snuff of heavy Cuban content.

Mitcham Mint.

The refreshing quality of this unique mixture will please both the connoisseur and tyro alike. Its manufacture meant a new departure in snuff blending for Fribourg & Treyer, since, instead of enlisting the fragrant resources of Grasse, they turned nearer home to Surrey, which county, owing to special virtues of soil and climate, grows the finest mint in the world.

Double distillation in a copper still - in use, by the way, for over two centuries - produces an essence unequalled for mild delicacy of flavour.

So perfect an ingredient called for a worthy base and after much trial and error one was found which, light brown and finely milled, not only retains, but even enhances, the piquancy, resulting in a final product *par excellence*.

Morlaix.

A modern product devised to meet a steady demand - too general to be overlooked - for a snuff with a perfume above the average. To strike the right balance, to ally the perfect aroma with a suitable base in the right proportions, presented a difficult but fascinating problem. After months of experimenting with the finest products that Grasse, the flower-growing resort in the Alpes-Maritimes, could offer, success was at last achieved.

Morlaix, the newcomer, takes its place modestly but proudly alongside the veterans. It is refreshing; piquant yet mellow; "clean" is perhaps the best description of its appeal. Besides pleasing old friends, it has won, and will win, many new ones.

Morocco.

The wide range of pelargoniums, known to most of us under the generic title of geraniums, is of infinite variety, but the sweeter smelling kinds from which this snuff derives its aroma, are grown chiefly in Africa.

Fribourg and Treyer regard this unique snuff as one of their most successful blends and offer it with confidence to the most discerning users. With a rich, dark tobacco base, the exotic essence of African geraniums makes Morocco a particularly happy combination, not the least of its virtues being a satisfying bouquet that endures but does not cloy.

Old Paris.

A triumph of the blender's art! Approved by Beau Brummell, whose opinion on snuff fixed the criterion of his day. This blend has the strange wine-like quality of maturing in storage and is one of the few mixtures containing Cuban tobacco. This rich, full-blooded snuff, dark in colour and coarse in texture, is ideal for the moderate user who enjoys an occasional satisfying pinch.

Princes.

A rich black snuff for those who prefer a coarse-milled mixture of full bouquet. The most widely used of the moist varieties. It has strong Regency associations and has retained its appeal for over a century and a half.

Princes Special.

A dark, moist blend, in which the rich fullness of Princes Mixture is retained, tempered with lighter, finer-milled snuff of subtle fragrance. Deservedly in the "best-seller" category, this grand snuff can be offered with confidence to the most critical of snuffmen. A favourite in the clubs and among members of the entertainment world.

Santo Domingo.

Though few of them would admit it, most snuff-takers are romantically minded folk, whose minds are more attuned spiritually to the spacious elegance of early Georgian times than with today's conflict of bustle and noise. To them, therefore, the name Santo Domingo brings like a "flash upon that inward eye" a picture of four-masted schooners and sun-drenched Caribbean Islands. And why not? for the base of this delicious snuff is made entirely from selected leaf grown in the island of Cuba. The delicate violet scent is yet another debt we owe to our clever friends in Grasse - the unchallenged leaders in the world of perfumery.

The idea of a purely Havana snuff came to Fribourg & Treyer when they acquired - among other curious snuff receptacles from the estate of Lord Ashburnham - one of their lead canisters labelled "Old Havana Snuff; brought by Admiral Pococke after the siege of Havana, 1762". The modern product shares with its two hundred-years-old predecessor the virtue of improving in store.

Seville.

The phenomenal popularity of their new perfumed snuff, Morlaix, encouraged Fribourg & Treyer to offer yet another aromatic variety, confidently believing that its unique quality will merit an equally kind reception.

The name Seville somehow at once suggested itself, perhaps because Spain provides one of the ingredients, or maybe because the delicate orange character of its perfume brings to the mind the sunlit groves and quaint architecture of that ancient Moorish city. Actually both Morlaix and Seville were used to name snuffs over two hundred years ago.

This addition to the snuff list will especially please those takers who favour an occasional pinch of a dry, piquant snuff as a change from the heavier, moister kinds.

S.P.

Probably the best known of the dry snuffs. A fine-milled, slightly perfumed blend, it meets the requirements of those who, for one reason or another, cannot use the coarser kinds. Like most of the dry snuffs, it is at once piquant and stimulating. The letters "S.P." have excited much more curiosity and conjecture as to their origin. For some time "Sheffield Pride" led the field possibly because in that town some famous snuff-mills are housed. Anyway, such widespread concern, challenged research, and its latest findings are that the first two letters of "Spanish" - a snuff much used in earlier days - provide the abbreviation. The "Sheffield Pride" school remains unconvinced.

The Rappees - Brown and Black.

Modest, unpretentious blends of the moist family. Old as the hills, the Rappee brothers have neither sought nor attained glamour, but remained solid, down-to-earth snuff without frills. A popular base for users who like to experiment with blends of their own devising.

Alfred Bryant - *Snuffman at 34 Haymarket for many years.*

Comment

Behind the Bow Windows was produced in (I guess) the mid 1960s. I was only about 15 when I became interested in snuff and investigated the products of a number of leading manufacturers. Although pipe and cigar smoking were still relatively common, snuff-taking was in deep decline and it was to be only a few years before the Government abolished duty on snuff.

At that time I tried a wide variety of snuff from all the manufacturers and, although various products from the Wilson firms at Sheffield and Sharrow, Gawith in Kendal, G Smith of 74 Charing Cross Road and

Hedges with their celebrated Menthol all were of interest, to my mind none had the sheer variety nor quality of Fribourg & Treyer's offerings, which also encompassed some reasonably good pipe tobaccos and a range of really superb, and much-lamented, cigars. In particular, it seemed to me that no other manufacturer was producing either the range or the quality of heavy, dark, moist type snuffs which were F&T's speciality. The sheer quality of their bases was such that their perfumes, memorable in themselves, could act more as a delicate accompaniment.

In about the mid 1970s their veteran snuff-blender retired and his place was taken by a lady, who introduced several new blends as well as faithfully preserving the excellent quality of the old.

I am moved to give tribute to the admirable Mr Bryant, the text of whose booklet I would hold up as a model of this kind of writing. It reveals a modest, interesting and knowledgeable personality, and above all a literate one whose choice of words is memorable far beyond the norm.

Fribourg & Treyer continued producing their products for a dwindling band of connoisseurs until the late 1970s when, alas, the firm closed down after a 200-year history. Many of my samples date from those years and, while some have endured unscathed, others are regrettably none too fresh, and only the powers of memory keep them alive. Below appear my notes upon each blend, together with a number from 1 to 5, which indicates the price category in the 1969 price list that appears as an appendix.

I am delighted that Wilsons of Sharrow have been able to take over and preserve Fribourg & Treyer's art - for assuredly it is an art - and to preserve a tradition whose death would, in my view, impoverish mankind.

Personal Notes

Asthoroth (2)

The name is probably a variant of Ashtaroth, meaning "wife", an idol of the ancient Philistines, Phoenicians and Zidonians (1 Kings 11:5,33); the name was also transferred to a Levitical town of Manasseh, beyond Jordan.

My personal appreciation of this rich, dark, tarry snuff is that this was one of the most original and impressive of F&T's creations, and would unhesitatingly designate it as my favourite. Latakia, ozer-smoked, *light* jasmin, medium/fine, moist. Not a beginner's snuff, but one for which the taste, once acquired, is never lost.

Bordeaux (4)

Bureau (2)

Blend.

Comore

Probably introduced by Mr Bryant's successor. Light, dryish, fine, refreshing, piquant.

Dieppe (2)

Brown, most, medium, delicate and fragrant.

Dr James Robertson Justice's Mixture

The fact that this resembles Asthoroth is probably no coincidence. It has proved extremely popular and I think I detect a smaller quantity of Latakia here. The fact that it is missing from *BW* perhaps suggests that it was first made in the mid- to late- sixties. The Wilson's version seems a little less tarry and perhaps has less Latakia.

Etrenne (2)

A mix of medium-coarse and fine, mainly dry. Carnation. Not dissimilar to a popular snuff by Smith's which is, however, wholly fine and dry.

F. & T. Menthol (3)

The quality of the soft base made this a particularly fine and rich example of a type which had many competitors.

French Carotte (2)

The retentive quality of the beautifully soft, moist base (which is very fine) gives this delightfully aromatic snuff a long store life. Possibly F&T had to switch supplier for the sandalwood essence, which seemed rather sweeter and more dominant in the latter years.

High Dry Toast (3)

Yellow, very light, extra fine and exceedingly piquant; nutty.

Jasmin (2)

An enormously attractive aroma and a velvety Havana base. Too much, perhaps, for constant use, but an excellent occasional "refresher".

Kendal Brown (5)

Deep brown, moist, coarse, pleasantly and delicately perfumed. Surely a challenge to Samuel Gawith (of Kendal), whose version employed a lighter, finer, drier base and was more strongly scented.

Light Dutch (4)

Macouba (4)

Medium fine, dry; attar of roses. Softer and more gently perfumed than Smiths' Attar of Roses. Base similar to, but coarser than, French Carotte.

Masulipatam (2)

Although described as "more or less unscented", there is a delightful aroma which, perhaps thanks to the Havana base, lasts well.

Mitcham Mint (2)

Very light and refreshing, enormously attractive to newcomers. Smiths' Garden Mint was similar, but more suggestive of menthol.

Morlaix (2)

Interesting and complex, medium moist and coarse.

Morocco (2)

The amazingly fresh and pure aroma is immediately attractive and quite unforgettable. Slightly reminiscent of ly-chee. In latter years, a medium-brown, medium-fine moist base. A great favourite.

Old Paris (2)

Rich and full-blooded this certainly is. It certainly does not suffer from long keeping and the complexity of its aroma is deeply satisfying.

Patchouli

An invention of Mr Bryant's successor, and probably making use of the same base as French Carotte, I personally regret this choice of perfume; but *de gustibus non est disputandum*.

Princes (5)

Rich, black, coarse and moist. A delectable base with a full flavour of its own.

Princes Special (4)

Black and very moist. Warm and rich.

Santo Domingo (1)

This has the distinction of being, along with Smiths' *Cafe Royale*, the most expensive snuff in the world. The fact that their price was the same may not have been coincidental. The violet perfume does not cloy but is enduring. Exceedingly heavy and moist, and

quite coarse. Not a newcomer's snuff.

Seville (2)

Light, gentle, dry, orangey, refreshing.

S.P. (3, 5)

There was an S.P. special, which was I think more highly perfumed, and sold at the higher price.

Rappee (5)

The black variety had a gentle but long-keeping aroma which was extremely pleasant and the base held its moisture well. A surprisingly agreeable example of the plainer snuff variety, in which the natural aromas of the tobacco spoke for themselves. The name comes from the French râpé, "grated". The rasp or grater was an emblem of the snuff trade and was used to grate the carotte. There is a literary reference to this snuff, too, in one of Hugh Lofting's delightful Doctor Doolittle books.



1969 Price List

	Mini	1 oz	2 oz	Presentation	4 oz	1 lb
1	5/-	17/8d	35/4d	37/10d	70/8d	155/-
2	3/-	12/8d	25/4d	27/10d	50/8d	85/-
3	3/-	12/2d	24/4d	26/10d	48/8d	80/-
4	3/-	11/8d	23/4d	25/10d	46/8d	75/-
5	3/-	11/2d	22/4d	24/10d	44/8d	70/-
P & P	6d	8d	1/-	1/6d	1/4d	