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2017 Preview

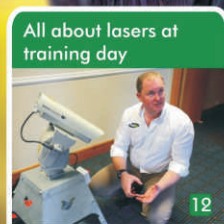


# pest

The independent UK pest management magazine

## Pigeons in the sun

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# Smoking them out!

Octavius  
HUNT

Smoke generators are tools that many pest professionals only use occasionally, if at all, but is that by choice, or because they don't realise quite how useful they can be? Associate editor Helen Riby travelled to Bristol, the home of Europe's largest smoke manufacturer, to find out more.

Visiting Octavius Hunt in Redfield in the suburbs of Bristol I soon discovered that there's a lot more to smoke generators than you might think. I also heard about the fascinating history that has brought Octavius Hunt to its current day position of Europe's largest producer.

The company was established on the current site in 1870 by a Mr Octavius Hunt. The eighth son in his family – hence Octavius – he was also a keen footballer, playing in goal for an early incarnation of the Bristol Rovers. Octavius set up his company to manufacture a then pretty modern invention, matches.

From these beginnings the company developed an expertise in pyrotechnics. It was the first British company to produce sparklers, moving on to become a firework manufacturer. Today the company is Europe's biggest producer of smokes.

So what is a smoke? Technical director Nick Dale has been at Octavius Hunt for 26 years

so he was definitely the man to ask. He explained that a smoke comprises four elements: an active ingredient, a fuel source, an oxidant and an inert or bulk carrier. These four components are mixed together in precise proportions and either packed into suitable containers, sealed and labelled as smoke generators or compressed into smoke pellets.

The active ingredient is often a biocide or a pesticide (natural or man-made) but it can also be a disinfectant. Indeed the product being manufactured at the time of visiting was Fumite OPP containing 2phenylphenol, a general surface disinfectant. This particular batch was destined for Turkey for use in confectionary factories. For servicing companies with a strong food sector portfolio could the use of such smokes be an add-on service?

Products containing no active ingredient are also manufactured.

These include smoke pellets used by plumbers to check that chimneys are drawing correctly, products to detect leaks in drains and even novelty smokes generating coloured smoke for parties and the like!



Technical director Nick Dale



The finished product comes off the production line



**Pest control catered for**

Products for the public health pest control sector include Fumite, a permethrin smoke generator and Cypex, a cypermethrin-based product. These come in a variety of sizes depending on the space to be treated. Cypermethrin smoke tablets are also manufactured with one tablet being sufficient to treat a room of 25 cubic metres. The company also contract manufactures own label products for many other businesses and lists many blue chip companies amongst its partners including the likes of Bayer, Syngenta, Pest-Stop, Certis, Elanco and Bob Martin.

As Nick commented: "Often pest controllers don't think about using a smoke but, adding it into an integrated treatment package, for example, as a first treatment to knock out heavy infestations of crawling and flying insects in domestic or industrial premises, before moving in with other treatments to deal with eggs etc, makes a lot of sense and all for very little additional cost. The addition of smokes allows a belt and braces service to be offered giving customers peace of mind.



Products containing no active substance

"Smoke products are easy to use with no special training or equipment required and smoke, unlike an aerosol spray, has a very small particle size so it gets into all the nooks and crannies in buildings and machinery. You could say it reaches the parts other pesticides can't reach!"

**Where to buy**

Octavius Hunt products can be purchased through an extensive distributor network. Fumite is an Octavius Hunt trademark however as the company provides an own-branding service you may already be familiar with their products under another brand. Within the UK they work with such companies as Bayer supplying the Coopex smoke generator and other brands such as Insecto, Critterkill and Pest-Stop.

A data package is currently being put together to obtain EU regulatory approval for a new mole repellent product. The product is part of a new range of natural smokes being developed under the Biofume brand. It was on display at PestWorld in the USA, where it already has EPA approval and Parasitic in Paris where it aroused a great deal of interest.

Increasingly professional pest controllers are being called in to treat grain stores for farmers. Octavius Hunt is well established in this sector as the manufacturer of the Actellic smoke generator. The active ingredient pirimiphos-methyl comes from Syngenta with Octavius Hunt providing the smoke generating technology.

The company's smoke generators are also widely used in the horticulture sector to



Managing director Seamus Butler

fumigate greenhouses and for crop storage with products to control fungal diseases as well as insect pests.

**Recipe for success**

The onsite laboratory not only serves as a quality control check – the company is ISO 9001 accredited with full traceability from raw material to finished product– but is also used for product development. New 'recipes' are devised here and burn tested in the pilot plant. It is the 'recipe' that is the technological heart of smoke production.

As Nick Dale explained: "It is the mixture which controls the temperature and so the rate of the burn. In some circumstances the smoke needs to disperse slowly and keep low for a longer time, for example where crawling insects are the main target. At other times, such as in a large grain silo, the smoke must disperse rapidly right up to the very top of the silo. Different 'recipes' deliver these different characteristics."

**Exciting times**

Seamus Butler is still the 'new boy' having joined the company as managing director in October 2016. However, you don't need to spend long with him to realise he has ambitious plans for the future development of Octavius Hunt.

The first steps have been to recruit a business development person and to rationalise the product range. Gone are the imported fireworks and paint ball product lines. The focus is now clearly on what the company manufactures at its Bristol site, namely smoke generators and pellets.

Since the arrival of Jo Scutcher as product/marketing manager in 2013 changes have also been made on the marketing front, with a new modern corporate logo and image being created, a revamped website and new literature.

Looking further ahead Seamus has significant plans for new investment in the manufacturing plant with more automation of the production process and

**Where it all began - match production**



Matches were manufactured at the Octavius Hunt Redfield site from 1870 until 2015. It is still known locally as 'the Match Works' and has the distinction of being the last matchmaking factory in operation in the UK.

Originally producing everyday phosphorous matches, including many famous brands as shown in the photograph above, in later years the company specialised in handmade speciality matches. These included windproof and waterproof matches supplied to the Ministry of Defence and to camping and leisure suppliers, Fusee matches for detonation and ignition purposes and Bengal Lights, novelty matches burning with a red or green flame.

The health and safety of the workforce is a priority. Production areas are zoned red, amber and green with appropriate PPE used in each zone:

- 1 Rafal Chojnacki, production manager in the 'green' zone
- 2 Jo Kolodziejczyk operating the pellet machine
- 3 Mixing is a red zone so Andy Taylor wears the full protective kit
- 4 Sally Ball operating the labelling machine in the green zone
- 5 George Dale in the quality control and development laboratory
- 6 Eniko Csiki inserts fuses – an amber zone activity
- 7 Alex Hermanska filling the containers with the smoke mix – another amber activity



increased capacity. This he sees as going hand-in-hand with the development of new international markets along with expansion into new areas within existing markets.

**Brexit uncertainties**

As a specialist manufacturer Octavius Hunt already exports 30% of its production. Mainland Europe is the biggest outlet and the Brexit vote is, not surprisingly, causing some concern.

As Seamus explained: "The biggest hurdle for our business is the uncertainty it is causing. We are committed to offering professional products with full regulatory approval. But what happens the day after Brexit, will our products still be approved throughout Europe? And what about those currently going through the system?"

"At the end of the day it may just mean more paperwork and with plenty of experience exporting to countries outside the EU – Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East and Africa – we are already in a better position than many other businesses."



Jo Scutcher and Seamus Butler on exhibition duty at Parasitec



Could Brexit mean more 'paperwork' for the admin team? Left, purchasing administrator, Dee Burt with sales administrator, Carol McCarthy

Developing bespoke products for particular circumstances and/or customers has become something of a speciality over the years and the company has a deserved reputation for problem solving. Historically, much of its new product development has been in response to customers asking for help. As well as continuing to respond to these requests there is now a drive to be more proactive.

A new product development (NPD) programme has already unearthed some unique smoke products. Additionally the company is now committed to a regular process of new product registration.

Seamus says "We know that by getting closer to customers and end-users and understanding what problems they face, better solutions can be found. Exhibiting at Parasitec last autumn and at PestEx this spring is all part of that drive."

Find out more about smokes by visiting Octavius Hunt at PestEx

# Company milestones

- 1870 company established by Octavius Hunt to manufacture matches. The business remained in the Hunt family until 1912;
- 1912 sold to Bryant and May;
- 1930 sparkler production began. Sparklers continued to made at the Bristol site until 1992;
- Early 1970s Bryant & May sold Octavius Hunt to its management in what was one of the early management buy-outs. Octavius also purchased another division of the group, Pains Wessex, and transferred its production of smoke pesticides to Bristol;
- 1982 Mr Sparkle fireworks launched;
- 1991 acquired by the defence business, the Chemring Group;
- By the mid 1990s fireworks were the growth area. The company became the first major importers of Russian fireworks into the UK. Fireworks were also being imported from Malta, Spain and China;
- 1998 following a second management buy-out Octavius Hunt once again became a private family owned business;
- 2008 Biofume natural smoke range launched
- 2015 match production ceased
- Today, Octavius Hunt employs 35 people. 12 are management/office-based with 23 production workers.

