

Revival of a Great Perfume Brand

BY ADRIANE JOHNSON

The International Perfume Bottle Association's (IPBA) 23rd Annual International Convention surpassed magical! To top our majestic event, IPBA members received a rare treat at the luncheon; an amazing experience, through presentation, of an 1830s perfume house going from dormant to a full revival, with this perfumery's rebirth orchestrated by a descendent. Simon Brooke, our keynote speaker, mesmerized members while detailing his account of reclaiming and resurrecting his family's perfume business: Grossmith & Sons.

Like most of us, Simon Brooke was going about his life honoring his business and family commitments, and simply trying to make meaningful contributions to society and connections to the community. He is a successful real estate businessman, husband, and father of two beautiful girls. It is through his side interest, a genealogy quest, that he stumbled onto the familial link connecting him to the Grossmith Perfumery.

While meeting one of his relatives that he identified through his research, Simon was presented with hand-written books that contained the original formulae for the precious perfumes that made the Grossmith company a London treasure. "The books were the Holy Grail for us. I couldn't believe my good fortune in finding them," Simon shared during his presentation. This great find set the tone for Simon; from digging deeper into the Grossmith company history to frequenting eBay and other sources trying to find remnants of his family's long-lost business. Simon combed through information on the Grossmith company's key personnel, its perfume creations, and its business operations to piece together a story so fascinating it sparked an interest in resurrecting one of London's most successful companies.

Founded in 1835 by John Grossmith, Grossmith & Sons is one of London's oldest perfume houses, with royal connections, having created a special



scent for Queen Victoria. Known for its three classic English oriental floral perfumes, Hasu-no-Hana (scent of the Japanese Lotus Lily), Phul-Nana (Hindi for lovely flower), and Shem-el-Nessim (Arabic for smelling the breeze), Grossmith made remarkable fragrances without any reference to cost and keeping natural ingredients wherever possible. The fourth fragrance created by Grossmith, Betrothal (romantic and regal), was a floral bouquet originally created for the Queen of England. The company made a wildly popular synthetic

fragrance, White Fire, that Grossmith & Sons were most commonly known. The Grossmith company's success reached beyond making perfume for the Queen to being awarded Royal Warrants by Queen Alexandra and the Royal Courts of Greece and Spain during 1901 through 1925. The Grossmith Company was also the only English company to be awarded a coveted prize medal at the Great Exhibition in 1851 for perfumes and essential oils.

Long-gone and nearly forgotten, the Grossmith company business lived on through its name, which was owned by a non-family entity, the owner of Fenton Pharmaceuticals, "a serial purchaser of failed companies," according to Simon. Through many rounds of fierce negotiations and "lots of Euros," Simon, the great-great grandson of John Grossmith, purchased the Grossmith company after more than 30 years of non-family ownership. As of August 2007, the Grossmith company is back in family ownership and is comprised of three Grossmith companies, which are under the J. Grossmith Limited umbrella.

Staying true to its rich heritage and roots, Grossmith Ltd., has revived Hasu-no-Hana, Phul-Nana, Shem-el-Nessim, and Betrothal, using the original formulae, and having fashioned the flacons as closely to the Baccarat bottles. In fact, a limited edition Grossmith Baccarat presentation was created, containing specially concentrated perfume of Shem-el-Nessim, Phul-Nana, and Hasu-no-Hana, which are on display at the Roja Dove Haute Parfumerie in London and at

the CampoMarzio70 in Rome. The crystal flacons were made using the original Baccarat mold from 1919 and have been etched in pure gold using modern designs derived from the original decorative patterns created by Grossmith.

With a witty spirit and healthy injection of British humor, Simon presented incredible images of Grossmith perfume presentations from the past to the newly revived packaging. The re-mastered and recreated perfume presentations range from a box shaped like a white piano, which is a part of the limited edition collection for the Sultan, to blue boxes housing beautiful crystal bottles with gold accents.

Simon's story certainly captivated IPBA members with its twist of fate, intrigue, blind luck, and great timing. For more information about the new Grossmith company and products, visit Grossmith Website at <http://www.grossmithlondon.com/>. Also, mark your calendars and plan on tuning in to the BBC Luxury Season—Perfume series in September 2011, for its special documentary on Simon Brooke's company entitled, "Revival of Grossmith."

The new Grossmith perfumes (and bottles) will dazzle collectors, and according to Simon Brooke, "Our fragrances are being enjoyed once again by perfume connoisseurs everywhere."

References

Grossmith London Website:
<http://www.grossmithlondon.com/>.
IPBA Keynote Presentation by Simon Brooke, April 30, 2011.



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