



Coors' Burton-on-Trent brewery: The Merlin project aims to minimise whole life costs for the revised packing lines rather than just the initial expenditure

# High speed lines start up as Merlin waves a wand at Coors

COORS BREWERY AT BURTON-ON-TRENT HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED IN JUST ONE YEAR – WITH NO LOSS OF PRODUCTION – UNDER THE COMPANY'S £35 MILLION MERLIN PROJECT.

In just a year since the decision was taken to spend £35 million on streamlining its packaging operation, Coors Brewers – owner of the Carling, Worthingtons and Grolsch as well as Reef FAB (fruit based alcoholic beverage) brands – is bottling and filling on what are believed will be some of the fastest lines in Europe, and maybe the world.

In early 2001 the company knew it would be forced to consolidate two plants into one. Separation of Coors Brewers from Interbrew had meant a loss of the export volume and, with 700,000 barrels of that coming from the company's Cape Hill brewery, the Birmingham based plant was clearly no longer viable.

But every cloud has the potential of a silver lining. "It gave us a one-off opportunity to lay out our packaging lines to best practice," says supply chain director Martin Thomas. There were, however, two options, as packaging manager Peter Orgill – who became manager of

what came to be known as Project Merlin – explains.

The simplest way forward was the "base case" which meant a simple transfer of lines from the closed plant at a cost of £8 to 10 million. However, says Peter Orgill, "the weaknesses were that there would be no improvement in efficiency and future expansion would be difficult." In addition there was a difficulty in managing what were split operations – north and south – at the Burton plant and there would have been major traffic congestion.

## Minimising whole life costs

The more courageous and initially far more expensive plan – the Desired Future State design – "considered minimising whole life costs and not just the initial cost," explains Mr Orgill.

"It had to meet the existing production plan, be capable of meeting potential volume

increases, maximise overhead savings and deliver a packaging strategy that included handling a greater range of can and bottle sizes as well as a greater range of pack formats."

Speed was then of the essence. The Coors board approved the £35 million capital spend in March 2002, the Merlin team was in place by the beginning of April and was buying equipment by the time April was over.

Basically, Merlin incorporates several projects. Two existing Burton can lines have been combined into a high speed line, new equipment added and all relocated in what was the southern warehouse area. An existing widget can line was relocated from Cape Hill to the same area; two bottling lines from Cape Hill were relocated in the area vacated by the two Burton lines; and all keg production was moved to the northern area. The FAB mixing equipment has been moved to a site close to the bottling lines.

These changes meant that by June 23 this

year Burton had three bottling lines (one retained and two relocated from Cape Hill), three canning lines (one merged from two Burton lines, one from Cape Hill and one existing line) and two keg lines with the potential for a third (mothballed from the Cape Hill site). And three packaging areas have been created – canning hall, bottling hall and kegging – with the added benefit that the north and south sections are now joined together.

The project was clearly a daunting engineering challenge with timetables that left little room for any mistakes or delays. Managing contractor for the project was Lorien. “The partnership approach provided design and project management expertise,” says Peter Orgill.

For example, canning lines two and one were stopped in Burton at the end of November and Christmas Eve 2002 respectively. The combined line was up and running with an annual capacity of 1,264,000 barrels – as opposed to the previous 638,000 and 604,000 barrels per annum – by 17 February. Filling speed is up to 2000cpm. Peter Orgill confirms that accumulation and conveying were a major plank in the investment, contributing significantly to overall efficiency.

Empty cans are unloaded using the Hydraroll system. Live bed conveyors inside the lorries carry pallets of cans onto powered rollers inside the canning hall.

### New depalletiser for cans

It would be impossible to describe all the lines in detail. The combined canning line, for example, features a new Busse depalletiser. With a capacity of 2500 cans a minute it includes a ‘dunnage’ handling system for automatic removal of the top frames, layer pads and pallets. Initial conveyors are also by Busse of Wisconsin and new mass flow conveyors were supplied by Gebo, of Strasbourg, France. They feature lid covers to comply with HACCP food safety and are designed to convey 2000 cans a minute to the filler.

The wide conveyors allow the cans to move slowly to alleviate risk of damage and to minimise fallen cans. A vacuum transfer unit discards any damaged or fallen containers.

A new Ling air conveyor and rinser turns the cans upside down and de-ionised air is blown into them to remove any trapped debris or dust. At the same time, beer is transferred from the bright beer storage tanks and enters the inlet buffer tank prior to the filler – the relocated

mulated again to enter the packaging area.

Once the various packs are collated they run along the pack conveyor system, which is split-level so that the conveyor can feed to any packing line conveyor. There are five legs: two Hi-Cone multipackers, new Kisters tray/film packers, palletiser lines; two new Riverwood Twinstack box multipackers, Kisters film wrappers and palletisers; and a Riverwood sleeve multipacker, Kisters Combi and palletiser.

Added to the widget line that was relocated from Cape Hill are Gebo full can conveyors and Alvey pack conveyors. The company also utilised a Hi-Cone line and a palletiser that was freed up from the combination of the two Burton lines.

### Conveyor investment for bottling

It was investment in depalletisation/palletising, conveying and accumulation that also typifies the new equipment in the bottling hall. KHS bulk glass depalletising is new on two lines as is Gebo and ASI conveying. In addition, a new Kronen labeller was added to the first bottling line.

End-of-line facilities are flexible to lines one and two. A Kisters wraparound case-packer, a Combi Kister, Riverwood Marksman and Riverwood Quikflex offer alternative styles.



**Depalletising:** A new Busse machine has been installed in the canning line

165 head KHS machine.

A new lid feed from CSW, Holland, takes the paper tubed can lids and feeds them into the hopper where the paper is stripped. After filling, lids are placed and sealed with an Angelus seamer. New conveying from Gebo transfers the cans into a new, two-deck Sander Hansen pasteuriser where they remain for around 40 minutes.

Air is blown onto the cans to dry them as they exit the pasteuriser and each can passes through a Heuft level detector station where underfilled cans are rejected.

Best before date codes are printed on the base of the can by ink jet coder and the cans run on three single file conveyors before being accu-



**Handling full cans:** Filled cans are taken to a new two deck pasteuriser

Coors reached “the end of the crucial engineering phase in June,” says supply chain director Martin Thomas. “We are now moving into the second phase – running the lines well.

“During the project we had to reinvent packaging as we went along; we had to generate output as we changed the lines. We tried to set the table as we were having lunch, but now we have a packaging platform of the future.” ■

# Focus on equipment

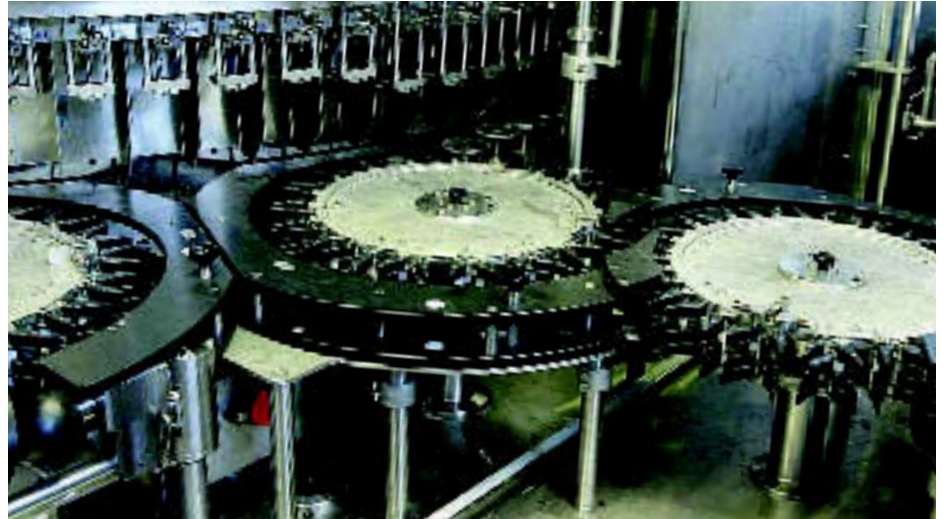
MICK WHITWORTH REVIEWS SOME OF THE LATEST EQUIPMENT FOR BOTTLING FROM PPMA MEMBERS.

FILLING

## Flexibility becomes the watchword for machinery

**F**lexibility has become the watchword in beverage filling as in most other production environments. Here, filler-packers are not just looking for ease and speed of changeover, but for kit that can accommodate still and carbonated liquids and plastic or glass bottles – and machinery suppliers are responding.

Planet Flowline, for example, has struck a partnership deal with Sympak B&C of Italy, which means it can now offer the UK machines catering for hot or cold filling in glass or PET. According to Duncan Griffiths, Planet Flowline's newly-recruited technical sales manager for the bottling industry, Sympak's range of monobloc rinser-fillers incorporate some exclusive design features. Its particular expertise, he says, is in rinsing, filling and capping of PET and glass bottles, including hot fill for still prod-



*Adjustable starwheel: Sympak system accommodates bottles of 50-99mm diameter*

ucts such as fruit and vegetable juices, and isotonic drinks. Volumetric and counter-pressure technology is available for producing carbonated beverages.

The British wine industry is also a key area for Sympak, which has developed a fully adjustable star wheel system that can accommodate glass bottles of 50-99mm diameter.

As well as representing Sympak, Planet Flowline is the sole UK and Eire distributor for

Zecchetti and Fava Artemio, both located in Parma, Italy.

The Zecchetti PET bottle air conveyor now incorporates several new design features, and the company offers a full range of palletisers and depalletisers, all of which can be coupled with its new Easypal multi-lane infeed system. From the Fava Artemio portfolio, Planet Flowline can offer a range of rotary bottle unscramblers, bottle orientators and silo storage systems which are also of interest to companies filling beverages into PET bottles.

## PET line at Silver Spring

**S**ilver Spring Mineral Water Co has appointed ACMI UK for the engineering and supply of a complete line with a capacity of 15,000 bph for 2 litre PET bottles.

ACMI says that as a result of the proven reliability of the machines involved, accumulation between them has been reduced to the minimum, providing a compact solution in limited space without affecting operation of the line.

The line being supplied by ACMI consists of: single frame air conveyors, bottle conveyors with divider from one to four lanes, pack conveyors, a shrinkwrapper, and a Faster 31 palletiser with single trolley and divider from one to three lanes.

**More information - enter 147**



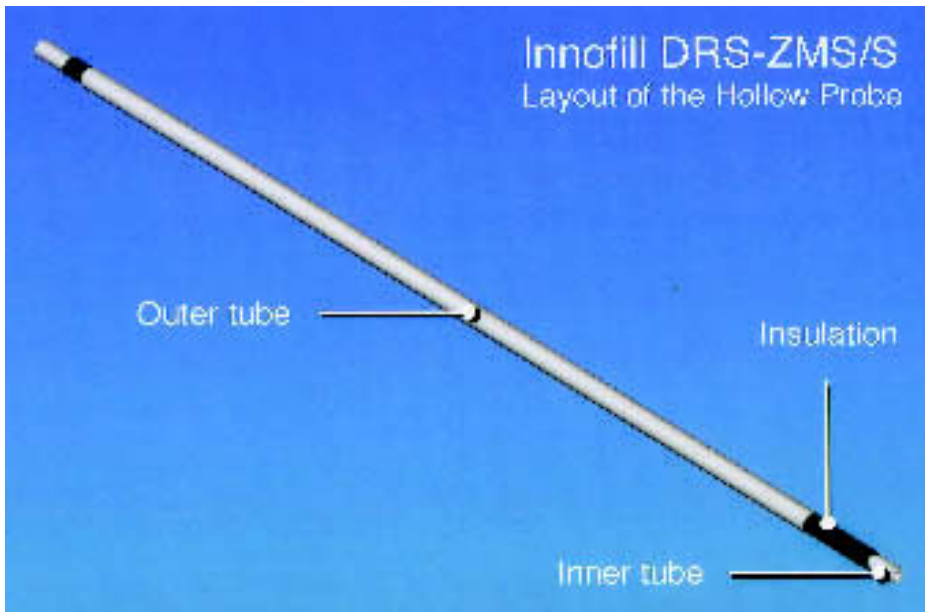
*High speed palletiser: ACMI is supplying a Faster model 31 machine to Silver Spring*

### Entry level filler

Peckam Springs, a mineral water company based in Lancashire's Rossendale Valley, has recently installed an eight-head level filler incorporating a three-head screw capper. The company was looking for a compact design and an economic price, and chose a monobloc machine from South African manufacturer Filmatic Packaging Systems, represented in the UK and Ireland by Grunwald UK.

The Filmatic level filler-capper is designed for speeds up to 60 bottles a minute, and is being used to fill Peckam Springs' brand of mineral water in 500ml square section PET bottles for airlines, cruise liners and other luxury outlets.

Neil Muncy at Grunwald UK describes the Filmatic unit as "extremely versatile, with



**Rinsing tube:** KHS has come up with a new system for filling beer in glass or PET

quick changeovers a particular feature", and says it could be equally suitable for products such as juice, milk or cooking oil. "Filler cappers of this size are ideal for small companies starting off," he says, "but they are also versatile machines for larger companies who experience a number of changeovers in a day."

When it comes to something a little stronger than mineral water, many of the world's biggest spirits brands have installed machinery from Stork, the Dutch supplier. Stork Bottling Systems offers a wide range of free-standing fillers, filler-cappers and rinser-filler-cappers, with air or product rinsing, to suit large-scale applications. Machines and complete bottling lines have been installed world-wide to handle wine and spirits bottles from 50ml to 4.5 litre, and Stork claims that over 65 per cent of global liqueur production is filled on its machinery.

Stork monobloc machines can be supplied with fillers and cappers for ROPP caps, Stelcaps and Guala closures, and the blocs can be electrically or mechanically synchronised to a labeller.

**Reducing alcohol losses**

Recent developments have included improvements to the filler valves designed to reduce alcohol losses, and the provision of colour-coded quick-release change parts. Clean-in-place systems can be supplied with the machines from new, or as a retrofit while operator control panels typically offer various menus to enable automatic changeover of bottle height, cap closure and fill level.

There is always pressure to achieve faster fill-



**No scuffing:** Lanfranchi plastic bottle unscrambler from Ultrapac

ing times, and the latest generation of air return tubes in Stork valves are said to combine quicker filling with increased cleanability. These valves can be mounted and dismantled without tools or put into existing vacuum-fillers as retrofits.

In Germany, KHS of Dortmund has come up with a new system for filling beer in glass and PET, based on its computer-controlled single-chamber Innofill DRS-ZMS unit. The chief difference with the new model, designated the DRS-ZMS/S, lies in its separate rinsing tube. This tube's sole purpose is to rinse bottles with CO<sub>2</sub> and measure the filling level, which means its length and bore can be geared solely to the technical requirements of rinsing.

According to KHS, this minimises the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> required to rinse plastic bottles while ensuring that oxygen impingement is "next to none". When bottling in glass, the DRS-ZMS/S follows a triple evacuation, double

CO<sub>2</sub> rinsing, pressurisation and filling sequence, which is also said to allow virtually no oxygen impingement.

Switching between glass and plastic is straightforward. "All that is required is a single push of a button to set the filling process optimised for the specific style of container," says KHS.

**Modular style bottle inspector**

Meanwhile, Krones has come up with a new compact, modular style version of its Linatronic empty bottle inspection system. A new software package accompanying the K735 unit reduces mistaken rejection of good bottles thanks to better detection of anomalies such as water droplets on PET containers and automatic monitoring of the camera image.

Ultrapac has been appointed agent for Lanfranchi plastic container unscrambling machines, said to be the fastest on the market with, for example, the largest in the range capable of handling 35,000 x 1.5 litre bottles an hour.

The design is based on a cylindrical drum fed from above. Bottles are carried from the hopper to a conveyor that runs up to the top dead centre of the cylinder and are then released into a rotating distribution silo.

Bottles fall a short distance from the conveyor on to a cushioned distribution cone which moves them outwards toward the Lift Master mechanism. This lifts the bottles individually to the orientation bays and is said to be ideal for unstable bottles and delicate containers, since all scuffing and abrasive action is removed.

The distribution silo is split into three 120deg zones to maximise the performance of the machine and minimise the time that a bottle spends in the silo. Bottles are never in the distribution silo for more than three revolutions, says Ultrapac.

Bottles are released via a mechanism that ensures they drop bottom first between the outside of the machine and its inner skin. Rejects are removed at this stage. The base section of the carousel revolves faster than the top to scoop the falling bottles into pockets at the base of the machine. From here they are removed via a star wheel, correctly orientated.

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CAPPING AND SEALING

# Sealing system suits Absinthe in one-shot PET bottle

This summer saw Scottish Courage launch Kronenbourg Déco – a combination pack comprising a 275ml glass bottle of Kronenbourg 1664 beer, topped by a 25ml PET bottle of Absinthe, the controversial herbal liqueur.

The brand owner experimented with a number of sealing systems for the one-shot PET bottle before deciding that induction heat sealing (IHS) would provide the best blend of seal, barrier properties and tamper evidence to contain the 45 per cent alcohol Absinthe.

It installed an MIT-1 semi-automatic IHS machine from Relco UK, which, according to Craig Wilson of Scottish Courage, provided “a low cost entry into this technology in a short lead time”.

The system built for Scottish Courage incorporates a direct-contact induction sealing head with what Relco describes as high accuracy power time and pressure controllers. It has an integral 1kW air-cooled digital induction generator, and is said to be capable of sealing any size or type of container. The primary equipment is portable – it only weighs 30kg – and can be moved from line to line as needed.

“Induction sealing is probably the most versatile system around,” claims Relco managing director Mark Gill. “It can be used on long or short production runs, it’s inexpensive to buy into and can be added to existing lines with minimum disruption.”

Scottish Courage was initially loaned an MIT-1 unit to carry out trials on the Déco packaging, and Craig Wilson says this enabled it to prove the technology quickly without substantial investment.

## Application to neck of bottle

Relco says its new method of applying IHS direct to the neck of the bottle means customers are not reliant on cap fit or torque to ensure a perfect seal, as can be the case with tear-band closures or induction cap sealing. The system, which uses foil fed from a reel, can also be applied to unusual or non-circular containers.

In addition, Relco says it offers cost savings over induction-lined closures. One Relco cus-



*Induction sealed: PET and glass bottle combination in Kronenbourg Déco*

tomer is reported to have recovered the capital cost of the system in 12 months through material savings. Another has done away with the closure altogether, saving cost, reducing weight, and removing the need for a thread on the container neck. In an application using pre-formed foil discs and no closure on a glass container, three induction heads seal the foil directly onto the glass, while three further heads crimp the sealed foil around the neck.

Relco’s equipment can also be used in aseptic filling chambers, providing a hermetic seal while the containers are still in a sterile environment.

Most applications continue to call for conventional caps, however, and 2003 has seen Krones unveil what it describes as a radically new concept in screw capping for aseptic applications. The design restricts to the absolute minimum the number of machine components above the bottle guides, minimising microbiological hazards.

The servo-controlled closing head drives are said to provide “ultra-precise” closing and the system can cope with different closure sizes,

tightening torques and thread configurations. On-line monitoring of all closing functions means quality control documentation can be produced automatically.

Krones points out that its servo-controlled closing head drives are also available for non-aseptic plastic closure cappers.

Meanwhile Cap Coder used September’s PPMA Show to introduce an upgraded capper that can handle containers up to 5 litres, employing a cap feed system which, the company says, “is a little unusual, but should find acceptance among those who appreciate simplicity”.

## Rotary feed table

Instead of the usual vibratory bowl feeder arrangement, caps are loaded cavity-down onto a rotary feed table and guided to a vibratory linear feed, which takes them into the machine. Some fence adjustment is needed to cater for different sizes of cap, but there is no need for height adjustment.



*Swing torque head: Cap Coder system gives faster capping for bigger bottles*

Caps are screwed onto the container using a CC720 swing torque head. This has two torque heads on a centrally pivoting beam. While one head is screwing a cap on, the other is picking a cap up. A vertical lift/escapement unit raises the cap from the linear feed track to the torque head pick-up point and this automatically compensates for differences in container height.

Cap Coder says it has also made improvements to its torque head, which now has three gripping jaws, less intrinsic torque resistance and better cable management.

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#### SLEEVING

## Drambuie lifts capacity for tamper evident sleeving

A second high-speed Sleeveit applicator has been installed at Scottish distiller Glenmorangie's Broxburn site to provide tamper-evidence on bottles of Drambuie. The liqueur is produced at the West Lothian facility under the auspices of Glenaird, a joint venture supply chain company operated by Glenmorangie and The Drambuie Liqueur Co.

The first Sleeveit machine was delivered to the site three years ago when tamper-evident sleeves in Drambuie's familiar red and gold colours were introduced. It was part of a redesign aimed at maintaining the traditional feel of the bottle while bringing it up-to-date technically.

The model chosen then was a compact Sleeveit SC250 from Turpins Packaging Systems, capable of applying tamper-evident bands on the necks and caps of bottles, cans and jars from 20 to 60mm diameter at speeds up to 250 items a minute. The new machine, complete with scroll and band lock, is of the same design.

The Sleeveit range includes machines that can apply sleeve labels up to 330mm long at over 400 a minute and tamper-evident sleeves at anything from 60-600 a minute. According to Turpins, virtually any product shape can be accommodated, while conveyors, product handling systems and hot air or steam shrink tun-



*Tamper evident sleeving: Drambuie is now handled on a second Sleeveit machine*

nels can also be supplied to provide a fully integrated system.

Shrink sleeving has become the preferred method of tamper evidence security for food and beverages, according to Graham Labelling Systems which has just added a new variant to its VF650 high-speed shrink sleeve applicator range. Named the VFE, it promises easier set-up and operation and a new development in sleeve perforation.

#### Full body sleeves

Standard neck seals are normally removed using a simple vertical perforation which, once torn, allows the seal to be peeled away from the closure. But what about newer bottle designs decorated with full-body sleeves that encompass the cap or lid too? These, says Graham Labelling, call for more sophisticated tear patterns cut into the sleeve that will leave the decorative element intact when the tamper-evident part has been removed.

For a number of years Graham has made integral cross and vertical perforation a capability of its RF sleeving range. But it has now applied for a patent on a new high-speed perforator that can operate with the VFE right up to

its maximum throughput of 650 units a minute.

The perforation unit is fully integral with the VFE, says Graham, but it can be supplied as a retro-fit as well as built into new machines. The perforation action is synchronised with the web feed indexing action via the overall machine control system. It can be used with cut-to-length or photo-registered web indexing modes for clear or pre-printed material, and the position of the perforation is fully adjustable. Maximum perforation, says Graham, is 165mm across by 65mm high.

#### Low cost blades

Change part blades are said to be low cost and easy to replace on the machine. Graham recommends that customers running multi-product lines should have several change part perforation heads with different configurations set up and ready to run, to allow speedier changeovers.

In addition to the standard VF650 specification, the VFE includes a fully retractable setter/operator access step built into its base, an integral colour control panel for fully programmable set-up and operation, and a full-size 'clear view' front door or guard, with full-frame panelling-cum-exclusion guarding.

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#### END-OF-LINE

## Shrinkwrap replaces case-packing by hand

They used to do things the hard way at Bragan Water, a bottler of natural mineral water based in Ireland's Co Monaghan. Until recently the company was case-packing bottles by hand and manually sealing the boxes ready for palletising.

But growing demand encouraged Bragan to find a more twenty-first century solution that could take labelled bottles from the line, sort them into different formats and wrap the whole collation at a speed that matched demand – currently around 9000 x 1 litre bottles an hour.

Bragan installed an Adpak B700 Swift automatic shrink-wrapping system. This accepts

## BOTTLING REPORT

bottles from a single line infeed into adjustable multilane guides and, using a gating mechanism, sorts them into collations for the application of shrink film.

Collations are transferred directly onto the shrink tunnel's mesh belt by a mechanical pusher – a feature which allows the transfer of unsupported bottles onto the tunnel conveyor without disturbing the collation. A pneumatic transfer plate covers the sealing jaw during the process.

The B700 Swift is designed to allow quick changeovers – less than 30 minutes, according to Adpak – with simple change parts and minimal use of tools. Bragan's bottles range from 250ml to 3 litre and are packed in various collations from 3 x 2 format up to 6 x 4. Left, right and inline feeding versions of the B700 are available.

High speed collation and wrapping of board sleeve multipacks, such as four-packs of bottled beer, is the speciality of French manufacturer Paker, represented in the UK by Integrapak.

Integrapak says the servo adjustment of these machines, allowing quick changes to configurations, means they are well suited to the demands of the drinks industry. "Paker has the French flair to design imaginative sleeve



**Automatic wrapping:** Bragan Water has chosen an Adpak B700

designs for difficult applications, taking full responsibility for the carton specification," says Integrapak. "But, unlike some of the tied systems, customers are free to purchase their board blanks from any supplier."

With the widespread pressure to reduce

packaging, Paker is increasingly asked to design sleeves that lock around the top rim of the container – a system that requires considerably less board than a full wraparound.

"This type of sleeve has to be carefully designed to ensure a tight, reliable pack while still performing well for the consumer," points out Integrapak.

### New top-loading machine

Mondo & Scaglione is a familiar name to beverage bottlers in the UK, particularly in Scotland. The family-owned business, based in north-west Italy, has been selling machines here for a number of years.

And this year it has signed a new, UK sole-distributor agreement with Bradford-based Wrapid Packaging Systems, which the latter believes will help strengthen its presence in the liquid processing and general packaging markets. Among the new Mondo & Scaglione machinery Wrapid can offer is a top-loading pick-and-place machine with a universal lifting head, suitable for "bottles, jars, cans or any other liquid container".

Also announcing a new agency deal this year is Erapa (UK), which has been appointed by

## BOTTLING REPORT

Vacuum Pump of Italy to market a range of automatic shrinkwrappers. One of these, the AM70AMC, is a fully-automatic collation and sleeving unit aimed particularly at bottlers. PLC-controlled, the machine can produce traded units with or without board trays at speeds up to 22 a minute.

French manufacturer Cermex, whose machinery is found in most major UK distilleries, has recently introduced a high-speed wraparound case-packing machine capable of

and the tubes got over this problem," explains the company.

The French champagne industry has also become a major customer for Cermex. Packing robots are used to 'top and tail' the bottles into pulp trays, then wraparound machines carry out the final case-packing operation.

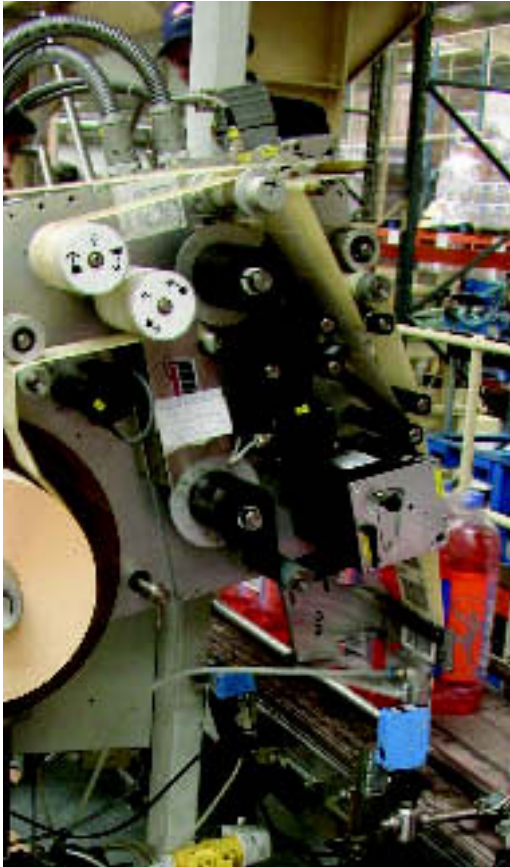
In the soft drinks market, Irn-Bru manufacturer AG Barr has recently installed three print-apply labelling systems from Logopak International as part of a general upgrade at its Mansfield plant. The new units replace Logopak 806 b90 labellers installed at the site 10 years ago. These were still fully operational, but could only label at 45 packs per minute. The

new units – which have the designation 906 11 b90/400 – incorporate Logopak's latest controls and provide labelling speeds of up to 85 packs a minute.

Each of the new units was fitted with an integrated barcode scanning system which ensures each label printed and applied to the shrink-wrapped trays is legible. If not, an audible alarm is sounded.

Logopak's SFB print-head technology has also been incorporated in all three units. This enables thermal direct label material to be used with printhead life extended to five times the industry standard of 50km.

Meanwhile, the older 806s, overhauled by



*Print-apply: One of the three new Logopak machines installed at AG Barr*

speeds of up to 50 cases a minute. The model is already in service in several countries, it says, handling bottled water.

There is a growing requirement in the spirits industry to run bottles and cartons on the same line, and Cermex says its AN90 robot packer has been proven in several such applications. Both bottles and cartons can be difficult to handle in these circumstances, it says, since it is important these high-value items remain in pristine condition.

Loading bottles into tubes is similarly challenging. Cermex claims to have had considerable success at Glenmorangie where a robot packer has been in service for several years. "The fit of the bottle in the tube is critical, and using a robot with a scroll infeed for the bottles



*Pick and place: High output top load case packer from Cermex*

Logopak, are now providing back-up whenever the new units are undergoing cleaning, consumable replacement or maintenance.

Weyfringe, another barcode and labelling specialist, has launched its own print-apply system aimed specifically at bottling businesses. The DB2 labeller is capable of applying top, side or front labels at speeds of around 40 a minute and can be supplied with its own conveyor or to slot in alongside existing handling systems. Prices start from under £4000.

### **Two-axis gantry palletiser**

Adpal has recently installed a Newtec Pal-Vite 1000 two-axis gantry palletising robot at William Grant & Sons Distillers in Bellshill, near Glasgow. The system has large grippers which, on every cycle, pick up a full layer of cases of whisky bottles, from 20cl up to 4.5 litre bottles, at speeds up to 220 layers an hour.

Right at the other end of the country, Adpal has won an order for palletising bottles of ciders and speciality soft drinks at Merrydown, based at Horam near Heathfield in East Sussex.

The new system – a Newtec Pal-Pack 4700 layer palletiser – will be handling shrink-wrapped packs of glass bottles, both in trays or on base cards and, because both six and 12 pack products are being handled, is fitted with an automatic interlayer sheet dispenser. The controls employ a 10in colour touch screen.

Finally, for glass container manufacturers, Strapex is now producing its Endra End-Sealer strapping machinery for securing horizontal layers of glass bottles. It can be retrofitted into existing palletising systems and is said to provide consistent accuracy in strap tension and position, for pack stability during transit. ■

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