

## The Last Liquorice Allsort

by Christina Buchanan

The world's last liquorice allsort is being auctioned at Sotheby's. Originally manufactured by George Bassett in Sheffield they were later produced in factories all over the world including the Netherlands, Portugal, Canada and South Africa. But the sweets fell out of favour in the twenties when campaigners waged a successful battle against the Bertie and Betty Allsort mascots, claiming that they were an insult to people with flat, cylindrical pink, orange and yellow stripey faces, and manufacturing came to a halt altogether in 2028.

The liquorice allsort being auctioned tomorrow was discovered by a retired solicitor in Eastbourne in the pocket of an old jacket. He claims he almost ate it before his wife pointed out how valuable it might be. It is just over one centimetre cubed, with black and white stripes, and its discoverer says it wasn't one of his favourites, which is probably why he forgot about it for thirteen years.

The liquorice allsort is attracting huge interest on both sides of the Atlantic with hopeful buyers queuing on the pavement outside Sotheby's for several days, and more than 100 internet bidders expected. Sotheby's themselves have been displaying the allsort for the press and television cameras in a specially constructed glass case and it has been under 24-hour guard since arriving at the auction house in an armoured vehicle.

Now over to John Simpson who is outside Sotheby's. Can you describe the mood for us John, as we wait for the doors to open?