

## Spurs on clay pipe stems.

### Tinderbox pipes

Richard lees , pipe maker 3/10/2008 ©

[www.tinderbox.co.nz/clay\\_pipe\\_store.html](http://www.tinderbox.co.nz/clay_pipe_store.html)

The stem of a pipe is also known as a shank. Beneath the bowl on early pipes is a protrusion called a spur. There is debate about the origin of the spur.



I am of the opinion, and from my experience as a mold maker and maker of clay pipes with a gin press – that the spur was the piece of clay that was left on the pipe after excess clay had been extruded from the mold.

The spur is part of the making process and the reason is this:

A gin press is used to force the clay into the pipe mold. Excess clay cannot be compressed and has to escape somewhere for the pipe to be formed properly and to avoid breakage of the equipment – mold and gin press.

The early pipe molds were made of wood and I have made wooden pipe molds. These were quite functional and worked very well. In order to allow the excess clay to escape, I put a small vent in the mold below the bowl and excess clay was extruded at this point and resembled in every detail the spurs on pipe artefacts.

Later improved design of pipe molds enabled the excess clay to escape at the top of the mold as the pipe was being pressed and the need for the vent below the bowl was no longer required.

Pipes pressed in these moulds do not have spurs. An example of pipes pressed in these later moulds are the Tinder Box Pakuranga Toastie pipe and the White earthenware pipe both pressed in a T.Mclachlin no 18 mold.



The T.Mclachlin no 18 molds and plunger – note there is no vent on the mold beneath the bowl.