

Clay smoking pipes – a brief history

Tinderbox pipes

Richard lees , pipe maker 3/10/2008 ©

www.tinderbox.co.nz/clay_pipe_store.html

A Clay smoking pipe is a pottery (ceramic) pipe. Clay pipes were traditionally known as "Clays". The first clay pipes were made on a gin press using wooden, and later, cast iron moulds. Men and women worked in pipe making factories. The women produced the "rolls" for the men, these went into the pipe making mould and were pressed by the men. The women carried the completed pipes away to dry, be fettled and placed on racks before being fired in a kiln. Later, slip casting was used to produce a greater range of pipes. Men and women smoked pipes, children used them for blowing bubbles.

The parts of the pipe are the bowl - the hollowed part that contains the tobacco, the stem, sometimes called the shank, is the thin part through which the smoke is drawn or bubbles blow. At the end of the stem is the tip or mouthpiece . Beneath the bowl is the heel or spur which protrudes downwards.



The use of clay tobacco pipes - known as Clays - came about with the introduction of tobacco from America in about 1558. Men, women and children smoked tobacco at this time. Smoking tobacco was called Tobacco drinking. Indian pipes influenced the design of the first pipes.

As tobacco became more freely available and the price dropped, bowl sizes increased. This occurred firstly in about 1640 when stems also increased in length

Children and pipes

Pears Soap used pipes to advertise the purity of their soap in a famous picture which has a child blowing bubbles. Though pipe stems broke, they were often smoked until the stems became too short - these were known as 'nose warmers! These broken pipes were often given to a child to use as a bubble pipe.

Tobacco

It is said of tobacco that one plant produces enough seed for an entire crop. The seed is very small. The tobacco plant has a pretty pink flower. Tobacco smoking is a health hazard. Nicotine is poisonous.

