

KENDAL and SNUFF

TOBACCO

The earliest explorers of America found the natives chewing and smoking tobacco leaves. It was brought to the European Continent where apothecaries sold it to be smoked in a pipe or as snuff. The sedative and habit-forming effects of smoking are due to the fact that tobacco contains the drug nicotine, a deadly and dangerous poison. Nicotine was named after the French Ambassador, Jean Nicot, who was passionate about the pleasurable use of tobacco which was known as “nicotina” after him.

Tobacco is thought to have been brought to England from America by Sir Walter Raleigh in the 16th century and smoking became the fashionable new habit among the rich and leisured classes, incidentally helping to create a demand for the plant in America which brought wealth to the colonists there. The story goes that Raleigh’s servant was so startled to see smoke rising round his master’s head as he smoked his pipe that he threw the contents of a tankard over him and screamed for help. It was the first time he had seen anyone smoking. A great outcry emerged against the use of tobacco and King James I published a bitter pamphlet against it, *Counterblast to Tobacco*, as well as placing a heavy duty on tobacco, but its popularity only increased. The strange American Indian practice of “drinking smoke” became one of the marvels of the New World and a most desirable pleasure.

SNUFF

Snuff is essentially dried tobacco leaves ground into powder which is sniffed into the nostrils as an alternative to smoking tobacco. A pinch of snuff is placed on the back of the hand and sniffed, the word “snuff” imitating the sound of the sniffing. This often produces a heavy sneeze which is thought to be beneficial in clearing the nasal passages of germs curing such problems as toothache and colds.

During the plague of 1583 in Kendal some two and a half thousand people died. In the outbreak of 1623 there were far fewer deaths, which was put down to increased taking of snuff to ward off infection. The French hailed it as a cure for all ailments

The habit of taking snuff goes back to the early days of tobacco in the West. When Christopher Columbus rediscovered America in the 15th century, Friar Romano Payne who sailed with him, noticed the native Indians sniffing tobacco ground to a fine powder through a hollow tube. This seemed to bring them pleasure. Snuff taking only became popular in England from 1702 after Sir George Rooke captured a convoy of merchant ships at Vigo Bay containing Spanish treasure, one of which had a cargo of snuff on board. Some of it was distributed among his sailors but most found its way to the coffee-houses in London where the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson and other men of note took up the habit. Snuff was cheaper and contained more nicotine than pipe tobacco and the English Court took it up. Tobias Smollett wrote in his "The Expeditions of Humphrey Clinker" (1771), in a letter to Mrs. Mary Jones at Brambleton Hall;

"... but then I have such vapours, Molly. I sit and cry by myself, and take ass of etide, and smell to burnt feathers, and kindal-snuffs, and I pray constantly for grease that I may have a glimpse of the new light, to show me the way through this wretched veil of tares."

SNUFF IN KENDAL

By the beginning of the 18th century Kendal had become the major snuff manufacturing centre in Britain. In fact, it is one of the few places where it is still made. Tobacco was brought from Virginia and Maryland in North America to the west coast ports of Whitehaven, Workington and Maryport, from there it was taken the day's journey to Kendal in pack horse trains. In 1739-40 some 4.5 million pounds of tobacco were imported through Whitehaven alone, providing considerable revenue in customs duty.

KENDAL SNUFF MAKERS

The tobacco trade in Kendal was well established by the beginning of the 18th century. Thomas Tolson was the leading trader and amassed a considerable fortune. The first water-powered snuff mill in Kendal is believed to have been opened by Matthew Whittaker in 1740 on a site near Kendal Parks. There is no sign of it today. Three snuff mills were advertised for rent in 1755 in Castle Mills but it is not recorded who the snuff makers were.

In 1792 Thomas Harrison, a Kendal man, brought machinery from Scotland and the necessary skill and knowledge of operating a four-mortar snuff mill and set it up on the River Mint at Mealbank. About 1830 Thomas Harrison's son, also named Thomas, bought 27 Lowther Street, not far from the Town Hall, where he set up his home and opened a snuff factory there. He also brought with him the recipe of the original 'Kendal Brown' snuff. The formula for which is still used by the present snuff makers, "Gawith, Hoggarth & Co Ltd", is held in a bank strong room in Kendal. Its secrets are known only by one or two of the firm's most trusted staff. When his wife Ann died in 1851, the first Samuel Gawith took over the house and business. The name of Gawith which is still synonymous with snuff in Kendal. In 1862 the company bought the premise next door for £300 from the owners, the defunct Kendal Dispensary. The business prospered, and Samuel was elected Mayor of Kendal, only to die during his year of office.

GAWITH and ILLINGWORTH

When Samuel Gawith died in 1865 the business was run by his two older sons, the second Samuel Gawith and John Edward Gawith. As they were only 18 and 22 years old, and deemed too young to take over the business, Henry Hoggarth and John Thomas Illingworth, the latter being one of the firm's representatives, were appointed as two of the trustees to act until the boys were older. At some time the Greek letters for "SG" (Samuel Gawith) were carved into an archway close to 27 Lowther Street. It is a fitting memorial to the name of Gawith but

it is not known who was responsible for it. In 1867 Illingworth left the firm and set up his own snuff business at the Highgate end of Drug Store Yard.

Illingworth died in 1888 and in 1892 the firm, then run by his sons, opened a purpose-built snuff factory in Sandes Avenue. In 1920, when Gawith's opened a factory adjacent to his, Illingworth moved to a new factory, Aynam Mills, on Canal Head. He was not as successful as the Gawith firm, and became bankrupt, selling out to Gawith, Hoggarth & Co. Aynam Mills burned down in a disastrous fire in 1983 but was rebuilt despite the firm closing in 1986.

THE END OF SNUFF MAKING IN LOWTHER STREET

In 1878 the two Gawith brothers, John Edward and Samuel, separated and John Edward set up on his own in the tobacco business in Lowther Street, soon afterwards entering the snuff business. Samuel continued snuff making at the Mealbank mill. In 1881 he opened a new and larger factory at Canal Head named "The Brown House" which was named after the firm's most popular brand of snuff, "Kendal Brown". John Edward was not successful and went bankrupt. Samuel took over his goodwill and other assets in 1885 utilising the Lowther Street premises.

Samuel died in 1886 and his son, the third Samuel Gawith, was only 2½ years old so the family business was again taken over by trustees until about 1904-5. In 1887, Henry Hoggarth joined the firm which then became "Gawith, Hoggarth & Company" and in 1923 it became a limited company which set up a water-powered snuff grinding mill at Helsington Laithes. This was dismantled only a few years ago.

Snuff making continued in Lowther Street until 2009 when the firm moved to a new premises off Shap Road, and The Brown House ceased production in 2015.

Kendal became renowned for its "Kendal Brown" and "Kendal Rapper" snuffs and for a time snuff making eclipsed even that

of the staple industries of wool or leather. In 1900 something like a thousand pounds a week was paid in Customs duties.

MAKING THE SNUFF

This is a simplified account of the manufacturing process:

- When the tobacco leaves arrived in the factory they were divided into two parts, one for dry working and the other for wet working.
 - In the dry working process the leaves were laid in a drying room and when sufficiently dry, were enclosed in a cylindrical drum and smashed into a fine powder by steel balls.
 - In the wet process quantities of leaves were put into a conically-shaped mortar in which a revolving steel pestle ground them into powder.
- When the powder had reached the required consistency it was transferred to a three-pestle mortar for further grinding and then put into a mixing pot where further moisture, salt and various carbonates were added.
- Some manufacturers also included ammonia to bring out the flavour of the tobacco.

Different grades of snuff are blended and essential oils or essences are added. Camphor or spices are added to give each type of snuff its attractive smell and unique flavour. Kendal Brown snuff is flavoured with camphor. The range of snuffs became extensive over the years. Some other names include Afterglow, Otterhound, Bouquet, Sir Rumney's Mentholypus and Western Glory, a favourite of Sir Winston Churchill. Kendal Brown, however, continued to lead the field.

SNUFF TODAY

Snuff taking became very popular among those who wanted to experience the pleasure afforded by nicotine without the danger of causing a fire through smoking, particularly by working men and even women in the mills and factories.

Snuff was a universal product used first by the gentry, both men and women, but in time by the middle and labouring classes. The actions of taking and offering snuff among gentlemen became an elaborate social ritual. Women of society did not take normally indulge in the habit of taking snuff but it is recorded that Patrick Brontë's wife did so from a very pretty gold box and offered it to other women, shocking them in doing so. Workmen carried their snuff in the tins in which it was bought but, in the 17th to 19th centuries in particular, the gentry carried their snuff in boxes made of precious metals decorated with enamels and intaglios, diamonds or gem stones. They became commonplace and plain in later years when used by ordinary, less rich people. They are now much sought after by collectors who pay very high prices for examples. Although still available, it tends now to be something of a niche or luxury product.

THE SIGN OF THE TOBACCO TRADER

In earlier days traders placed signs outside their premises to indicate their trade, particularly for those who could not read. The Bristling Hog in Stricklandgate indicating a brush maker, and the Mortar & Pestle over the chemist's shop in Highgate can be seen today. The tobacco industry too had its traditional trade signs. These took such forms as a Highlander in full kilted apparel, an African boy, an Indian Prince, or a Turk, or Saracen, in traditional dress.

THE 'TURK' or 'SARACEN' OF KENDAL

Gawith's took the Turk, or Saracen, for their sign and erected an effigy on the wall of their premises at 27 Lowther Street in about 1870. It is thought that the idea of using a Turk came from "The Turk's Head" coffee house in London where Dr. Johnson and other men of note took snuff. The effigy deteriorated over the years and, when an attempt was made in 1973 to lift it for repair, it fell to pieces as the wood was rotten.

THE NEW SARACEN

Kendal Town Council held a conservation competition to celebrate European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975, to improve the buildings and open spaces the town.

Mr David W. Boxford of Old Hutton entered the competition for the repair or reconstruction and erection of the “Snuff Man” shop sign over the door of Gawith Hoggarth & Co Ltd. This, naturally, was with the consent and co-operation of the firm. Mr. Boxford stated in his application;

“This statue used to be a familiar and entertaining sight over the pavement on entry into an otherwise rather grim street and I have always felt its reinstatement would add a lot to Kendal’s heritage and people’s pleasure in travelling around Kendal.”

Arthur J. Ayres, F.R.B.S, a craftsman from Chelsea was appointed to carve a new figure using photographs and a number of pieces of the old effigy for reference. A fixed price was agreed for the whole scheme to a maximum of £500 and Gawith Hoggarth & Co. Ltd agreed to meet any additional costs up to £150. The work was to be completed by the end of April 1976.

Mr. Ayres first made a ¼ scale model in West Burton Oak and wrote to Mr. Boxford,

“It was exciting to see the Snuff Man taking shape. The scale model had a great likeness. One thing I did notice that was different but probably only because of the small scale, was the tilt of the “baccy twist” which I imagined to be less, but more important, the right hand holding the pipe had, I believe, only one finger over the top of the pipe. It has to be a free rendering of the original but I am sure nobody will remember the old one in detail.”

The full-sized was completed from the wood of an old beam rescued from an old barn in Sussex, holding a twist of tobacco and smoking a long pipe. It was coated with white lead, painted in natural colours and partly gilded with English gold leaf. The total cost was £507, the £7 being for photographs used in the

process of carving. The Victoria Forge in Windermere made the wrought iron bracket to hold the figure in place on the wall.

Before being erected on the snuff factory wall it was exhibited at The Abbot Hall Museum.

THE SARACEN TAKES HIS PLACE AND LOSES HIS PIPE

It was erected by the Meacham Joinery Company, assisted by Davis Boxford and Geoffrey Gawith during the Kendal Gathering in November 1976, and within days the pipe disappeared. It was thought that it had been either displaced by a passing lorry or that vandals had stolen it. Fortunately, it was made of metal and not an integral part of the carving so Mr. Boxford had a replacement made and it was put into place in time for the ceremony of officially handing it over to the Kendal Town Council at a ceremony in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall on 18th November 1976.

THE SARACEN TODAY

In November 2009, Gawith Hoggarth & Co Ltd vacated the premises. Being very concerned for the future of the Saracen, the Kendal Civic Society arranged for it to be taken down and refurbished by Norman Holloway. While waiting for the better weather to replace the figure it was exhibited in an empty shop window in Elephant Yard. It was the first and probably the only opportunity to see the figure close-up rather than in its rightful place high up in Lowther Street.

The original brass plate fixed under the figure in 1976 remains in place. It reads:

“THE TURK

*Trade sign replaced by Kendal Town Council for European
Architectural Heritage Year 1975
Founded on the original which hung here for about a hundred
years till collapse in 1973
Carved by Arthur J. J. Ayres, F.R.B.S.”*

REFERENCES

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Pipes and Snuff

1. Pipes

Clay pipes are a very common archaeological find and show a gradual progression away from disposable and cheap materials to elaborate pieces. Some of these pipes begin to show simple decoration while others have been especially commissioned for memorial dates.

The majority of these clay pipes are Elizabethan, and reflect a growing trend for the consumption of tobacco; they are a stark contrast to the second collection of pipes below which are made from expensive and labour intensive materials

Clay 1986.1	Tewitfield, Carnforth	KMS
Clay KMS1987.154	Unknown Provenance	
Clay 1987.155	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.156	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.157	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.158	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.159	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.160	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.161	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.162	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.163	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.164	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1987.165	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Clay 1996.4	Cumbria	KMS
Wood and Horn 1987.199	Unknown Provenance	KMS

2. Pipes

Meerschaum 1987.200	Unknown Provenance	KMS
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Meerschaum is a lightweight and easily carved stone belonging to the soapstone family; it has been used in pipe making for at least 300 years. The softness of the stone makes it easy to carve whilst the porosity keeps the pipe cool in the hand and acts as a filter. The stone itself is white and it is only through years of use that the honey gold staining develops.

These pipes show the variety of designs and materials used in pipe making. Some are more decorative than others and probably less practical.

Horn and China 1987.201	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Bone and Metal 1987.202	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Wood and Horn 1987.203	Unknown Provenance	KMS

3. Snuff Boxes

When the consumption of snuff (dried and ground tobacco) became more popular, so did the associated snuff boxes. The boxes on display here reflect the various materials used (brass, horn, wood) and also the various decoration. Some are very simple while others have painted depictions of the Virgin and Child, carvings of local sites and even an engraving of a Roman myth.

Brass 1987.118	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Horn 1987.124	France	KMS
Wood and ivory 1987.125	Unknown Provenance	KMS
1850 Wood 1987.126	Kendal, Cumbria	KMS
Wood 1987.127	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Wood 1987.128	Unknown Provenance	KMS
18 th century Wood 1987.129	Unknown Provenance	KMS
Wood 1987.274	Unknown Provenance	KMS

Snuff
1988.20

Kendal, Cumbria

KMS

4. Snuff

Snuff was a very popular and profitable business in Kendal, with several major factories and business operating from the town. This collection shows the various flavours of snuff of snuff sold in varying methods and containers.

Kendal, Cumbria
Kendal, Cumbria

KMS 1988.20
KMS 1987.780

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