

# Pipe Smoking

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There is nothing more relaxing than sitting in the garden in a comfortable chair and smoking a pipe with a cool drink and watching the wildlife. I put out nuts and seed on the grass, some distance away, and watch the birds and the squirrels come to feed; very often rabbits join them.

Smoking a pipe quietens your mind and it is good for the soul. I can let my mind drift with the breeze. I had planned to start smoking a pipe when I turned 80 years old as a means of relaxation and also as a hobby. I figured I could get an old dog from the pound that no-one wanted and together we would enjoy our last few years, sitting in the shade of the sun in my garden and I would smoke my pipe. In the end, I brought the years forward and commenced smoking a pipe at 76 years old. The dog would have to wait as I enjoyed riding my motorcycles and leaving an old dog in the house on its own did not appeal to me.

Of course, prior to commencing this new form of relaxation, I had to do some research on the different types of pipes and tobacco. I intended to start a pipe collection as part of the hobby, so the research became quite extensive. I spent a few months watching YouTube videos, reading reviews and of course, the old faithful, reading articles on Wikipedia.

**Clay Pipes** - Pipes of clay were first smoked in England after the introduction of tobacco from Virginia in the late 16th Century. The habit spread quickly across the country and by the mid-17th Century the manufacture of clay pipes was a well-established trade. By 1680-1700, when the industry reached a peak, almost every town and city in England had pipe makers. Millions were being produced not only for local use but also for export. The size of the pipe bowl was increased over the decades to keep up with fashion and to allow more tobacco to be consumed. Long pipes allowed a cooler smoke, but also broke more easily and so they were often thrown away on the spot after use. The humble clay that had once been so commonplace had come another full circle and, in our modern times, has been returned back to a novelty status enjoyed on occasions by collectors, nostalgic smokers and re-enactors of times past. (*Wikipedia*)



**Meerschaum Pipes** - A meerschaum pipe is a smoking pipe made from the mineral sepiolite, also known as meerschaum. Meerschaum (German pronunciation: ['me:ɐ̯ʃaʊm], German for "sea foam") is sometimes found floating on the Black Sea and is rather suggestive of sea foam (hence the German origin of the name, as well as the French name for the same substance, *écume de mer*). The first recorded use of meerschaum for making pipes was around 1723. It quickly became prized as the perfect material for providing a cool, dry, flavourful

smoke. Because of the porous nature of meerschaum, moisture and tobacco tar are drawn deep into the stone. Meerschaum became a premium substitute for the clay pipes of the day and remains prized to this day, although since the mid-1800s briar pipes have become the most common pipes for smoking. The pipe offers up a cool smoke and today it is manufactured and sold by various pipe companies. (Wikipedia)



**Briar Pipes** - Briar pipes originated in the mid-19th century in Saint-Claude, France, where artisans began crafting them from the burl of the *Erica arborea* shrub, known for its durability and heat resistance. This innovation transformed pipe smoking into a more refined practice, leading to the widespread popularity of briar pipes across Europe. The origins of the briar pipe can be traced back to the early 19th century, when a French artisan named Pierre Rousseau discovered that the burl of the white heath tree, also known as the briar, was the perfect material for making pipes. The dense, hardwood of the briar was resistant to heat and flavour, making it an ideal material for the bowl of a pipe.

Over time, the briar pipe has evolved to meet the changing needs and preferences of pipe smokers. In the



Sherlock Holmes Collection – Sandblast Deerstalker



Sherlock Holmes Collection – Rustic  
Watson

early 20th century, the iconic bent stem of the briar pipe was developed, allowing for a more comfortable and ergonomic smoking experience. And in the latter part of the century, advances in manufacturing and technology allowed for the creation of new shapes and styles of briar pipes, catering to the diverse tastes of pipe smokers around the world.

Today, the briar pipe remains a cornerstone of the pipe smoking world. It is prized for its durability and flavour, and is a favourite among many pipe enthusiasts. And with its rich history and cultural significance, the briar pipe is a true icon of the pipe smoking world. (The Evening Piper.com)

I spent several months testing various types of tobacco samples and finally settled on the ones listed below. You can read about

the variants of tobacco leaf, such as Burley, Virginia, Cavendish, Black Cavendish, Kentucky, Maryland,

Oriental, Perique and their various styles, such as Rubbed, Flake, Twist, Plug and Ribbon along with their flavour nuances on the Smoke-King website. (*Smoke-King.com*)

Eventually, I settled on a collection of six Peterson Sherlock Holmes Pipes, manufactured by Peterson in Dublin, Ireland and three Savinelli Pipes, manufactured by Savinelli, in Italy.

The Holmes pipes all include 9mm charcoal filters and the Savinelli pipes all include 6mm balsa or 6mm charcoal filters. (*Peterson Pipes – Harrison & Simmonds - H-S.co.uk*) (*Savinelli Pipes - Smoke-King.com*)

I prefer to use the charcoal filters.

### My Pipe Collection –

- [Peterson Holmes Original \(Sandblast\) Pipe](#)
- [Peterson Rathbone \(Rustic\) Pipe](#)
- [Peterson Watson \(Rustic\) Pipe](#)
- [Peterson Deerstalker \(Sandblast\) Pipe](#)
- [Peterson Mycroft \(Rustic\) Pipe](#)
- [Peterson Baker Street \(Sandblast\) Pipe](#)
- [Savinelli Forester \(Smooth\) Pipe](#)
- [Savinelli 'Clark Gable' \(Rustic\) Pipe](#)
- [Savinelli St Nicholas Xmas 2024 616 KS \(Rustic\) Pipe](#)

Of course, a pipe collection is only part of the hobby. The rituals of packing the pipe, the lighting of the tobacco with a soft flame lighter and the cleaning routine play an important part. Each pipe and its associated tobacco provide a different and enjoyable smoking sensation. I also purchased a couple of lighters.

**VVAY Butane Gas Lighter** - An easy to grip and use electronic pipe lighter - just press the rear/top down (no flint required) and the (adjustable) soft flame comes out at the front. One additional feature is the inbuilt pipe tools, there's a knife, a tamper, and a spike. This lighter holds a reasonable amount of gas but if you re-light your pipe a few times, the flame power dies down, requiring a refill. The thumb press/hold gas button is at the rear of the lighter and a distance away from the flame so there is less chance of the flame stretching back to burn your thumb. I smoke outside, so unfortunately, during a windy day, I have to find a sheltered spot to light my pipe as the wind will blow out the flame. Can be purchased from Amazon.



**Zippo 'Templar' Petrol Lighter** – I like the raised casting on the Zippo 'Templar' which is a much better experience when holding the lighter compared to a Zippo with screen printing on the case. I purchased the petrol (Templar) Zippo along with a sealed unit (conversion) for the bottom of the petrol (insert) case to deter

petrol evaporation. You can get both through Amazon. The Templar is a beautiful piece of art and the conversion to assist seal the lighter really does help prolong the petrol content.

The sealed unit (conversion) for the bottom of the petrol (insert) case to deter petrol evaporation is very



simple to retro fit. You remove the existing flint screw and the foam rectangular seal. You then insert the conversion foam unit and then the conversion metal base along with its small rubber ring in the flint screw bed and refit the flint screw.

The Zippo 'Templar' is fully windproof and excellent for lighting my pipe in the worst of conditions. you can hold the lighters base, well away from the flame and it remains lit until you close the lid.

**Zippo Butane Insert & Generic Case** - I also purchased the butane 'chimney' insert along with a Zippo 'generic' empty chrome case, so as to have the best of both worlds, petrol and butane gas. Now, it is a different story with the butane 'chimney' insert as the gas start button is too near to the chimney.



You have to flick the flint wheel and then quickly press your thumb down on the button below it. You then hold down the button to maintain the lit gas. Flicking the flint wheel and then straight onto the press/hold button takes a lot of getting used to, and the action can prove painful on your thumb.



No matter, how careful you are, the flame invariably reaches back over that short distance, either through a flame blowback in the pipe or caused by the wind outside. Sure, it delivers a nice large soft flame into the pipe through the chimney but I have lost count of the number of times my thumb has been nipped by the flame. The butane insert and chrome lighter case make for a nice ornament.

**Zorro Petrol Lighter** - I also purchased a Zorro brass petrol lighter from AliExpress in China (on-line) which arrived within 2 weeks via Royal Mail in the UK. It puts the Zippo to shame as it is honed from a solid brass block into a case with thicker metal than a Zippo and with superior hinges, a lid gasket seal and a substantial petrol case insert.

Of course, it is larger and heavier than a Zippo but despite this, the Zorro is a joy to use. It cost me £14.99 and a £4 shipping charge. It's my first purchase from AliExpress but it won't be my last; they have a terrific range of Zorro lighters and at those prices, they are a steal.



I also purchased from Amazon a sealed unit (conversion) for the bottom of the Zorro petrol (insert) case to deter petrol evaporation and it is very simple to retro fit. You remove the existing flint screw and the foam rectangular seal. You then insert the conversion foam unit and then the conversion metal base along with its small rubber ring in the flint screw bed and refit the flint screw.



The Zorro is fully windproof and excellent for lighting my pipe in the worst of conditions. you can hold the lighters base, well away from the flame and it remains lit until you close the lid.

### Smoking a Pipe

There are loads of YouTube videos on how to pack, smoke and clean a pipe. They are a bit of a minefield as you have to negotiate through many contradictions in relation to pipe smoking. How you pack the pipe, how to detect aromatic nuisances in certain tobaccos that have been laced with vanilla, rum and other flavours. Detecting the room notes but if you smoke outside, as I do, the tobacco smoke note is very difficult to detect. And, of course, how to clean a pipe when you are finished.

I followed the three-stage method of packing the tobacco into the pipe, along with the false light to create the top ash tray, the light tamper down of the ash until it met the fresh tobacco below, and then the proper light. I use a petrol or a gas lighter with a soft flame rather than a gas blowtorch variant. Before cleaning, I let the pipe cool down.

I like my Peterson Sherlock Holmes Collection Pipes because they have a small hole in the top of the flute end which directs the smoke away from the tongue and up into the roof of my mouth. It prevents the dreaded tongue bite from hot smoke. However, and depending on the tobacco, the smoke can prove to be hot in the roof of the mouth; even when you sip the pipe. I like to smoke a little and then give my pipe a rest while I enjoy a cool drink to sooth my mouth. Re-lighting the pipe is never an issue.

When using my Savinelli Pipes, the smoke is directed onto the tongue. However, a cool drink by my side can help alleviate any tongue bite by cooling down my tongue. Tongue bite can also be avoided by taking gentle sips of the pipe smoke rather than a full-on draw of the pipe.

I use the beathing method which works out very well, but as is often the case, no matter how careful you are, the pipe may still get hot and will require a cooling down rest period

to protect the briar bowl followed by a re-light. I found that it took several months before the roof of my mouth adjusted and I could start to taste the flavouring nuances in the tobacco.



Savinelli– Rustic St Nicholas 2024 616KS



**Pipe Tobacco** – I tried lots of tobacco samples and finally settled on a few that I liked.

- Gawith Hoggarth – American CC - Coffee & Caramel
- Peterson Connoisseur's
- Erinmore Mixture
- Golden Blend's No.1 Vanilla Pipe

**Smoking Health Hazards** – Pipe tobacco is different to the tobacco which is found in cigarettes and it is similar to the hand rolled tobacco which make up cigars. Pipe tobacco is in the purest form and without chemicals that are usually found in cigarettes. Like cigars, you do not inhale the smoke, you collect it in your mouth and blow it out, either back through the pipe, straight out of your mouth, or both. In this way, pipe smoke should



never enter your lungs and this is the main reason I only smoke outdoors so that when I use the breathing method, I do not accidentally inhale any pipe smoke coming out of my mouth or out of the pipe into my lungs.

Of course, there are no guarantees that pipe smoking will not bring on health hazards, like a stroke or assist a cancer tumour to grow somewhere in your body. You smoke and you take your chances but I wish the UK tobacco tins did not have all those health warning labels - unlike in America, where the tin fronts are works of art. My grandfather smoked a pipe all his life and lived to reach 93 years of age. I figured at 76 years

of age; I would enjoy pipe smoking (which I do) and usually accompanied by a nice glass of lemonade, orange juice or Perrier water. I recently learned that drinking whisky whilst smoking is not a healthy option – so, I stopped that habit.

**Smoking Nicotine – Health Benefits** - Here are some of the well documented health benefits of pipe smoking (*Newhealth Advisor.org*) –

**Increase Neurotransmitters** - Studies have shown that the human brain contains about 86 billion neurons which depend on chemicals known as neurotransmitters to communicate between each other and to process information. Neurotransmitters help to regulate various functions within the body, including energy, sleep, libido, addictions, cravings and mood. They also control the way we learn, remember, focus and handle stress. Nicotine works by imitating acetylcholine and binding to nicotinic acetylcholine receptors to promote discharge neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and acetylcholine which are involved in cognitive functions.

**Have Antidepressant Properties** - One of the positive effects of nicotine is antidepressant. This property is believed to work due to nicotine's ability to affect the mind when it acts on nicotinic acetylcholine receptors. This action then has an impact on neural-pathways responsible for an individual's frame of mind. Nicotine is also thought to reduce stress and improve an individual's mood. Stimulating the central

nervous system, altering brain waves and increasing the levels of some neurotransmitters also play a role in the antidepressant properties. Some doctors regularly prescribe nicotine as an antidepressant.

**Possess Neuroprotective Properties** - Some scientists claim that nicotine may help protect neurons from degeneration through its ability to affect stimulation of nicotinic acetylcholine receptors and reduce estrogen levels. A 2012 study indicates that nicotine has protective properties in animals' brains.

**Treat Schizophrenia** - Schizophrenia presents with cognitive problems which may be improved by use of nicotine. The result is improved memory, better learning ability and other functions. It is believed that many schizophrenics use nicotine to reduce the effects of the condition by improving their mental stability.

**Manage Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** - Studies from the 1990s show that nicotine may help in the management of ADHD. In one study, nicotine was found to improve performance by increasing subjects' vigor. It was found to reduce reaction time and improve concentration.

**Control Alzheimer's Disease** - Researches into the ability of nicotine to enhance brain function have been going on for a long time. They follow indications that nicotine could be helpful in reducing the effects of Alzheimer's. Nicotine is believed to give encouraging results in the improvement of mental functions including attention, vigilance and recognition in persons with Alzheimer's.

**Help in Weight and Insulin Control** - If you have a weight problem, the other positive effects of nicotine may not be as important as weight control. Nicotine is said to help control weight by reducing an individual's appetite and hunger. It has also been found to improve blood sugar levels and insulin sensitivity according to studies carried out on obese mice.

**Increase Brain Waves** - Studies have shown that nicotine can affect electrical activities within the brain. When used by an individual whose brain is mainly producing beta waves – associated with stress – this individual's brain may be affected so that it produces more alpha waves, which are linked to relaxation and calmness. It has also been found that administration of nicotine through the skin causes an increase in production of alpha waves in both hemispheres of the brain as opposed to one hemisphere which is the case in people suffering from depression.

**Manage Parkinson's Disease** - There is low incidence of Parkinson's disease in smokers, which has been linked to nicotine. While little research has been conducted on this, it is thought that nicotine may have the ability to reduce the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

**Protect Gut** - Studies have shown that nicotine prevents the occurrence of ulcerative colitis – the major cause of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Nicotine is in fact used in some treatments for ulcerative colitis. It has also been found to help increase secretion of acid, bile and pepsin. It also aids bowel movement.

**Repair Body Tissues** - Nicotine has been found to help repair wounded body tissues. When applied topically, nicotine stimulates growth of tissues and blood capillaries within the affected areas. It increases blood flow to the wounded area and repairs the damaged blood vessels.

**Other Benefits of Nicotine** - Other positive effects of nicotine include reduced incidence of the following:

- Canker sores
- Uterine fibroids

- Vomiting during pregnancy
- Hypertension
- Endometriosis and endometrial cancer
- Thrombosis of the veins (Venous thrombosis)
- Fatal heart attacks

**No Nicotine Addiction** – I have been smoking a pipe with the above listed tobacco for 6 months and as yet there are no signs of addiction. I limit a smoke to a single bowl a day, and when I am with my girlfriend, I don't smoke at all, and especially when we are on holiday together. So, as yet, I don't appear to be addicted to nicotine but I only smoke my pipe, not cigarettes or cigars.

**In Conclusion** – Pipe smoking is most definitely a fulfilling hobby. Relaxing back on a comfortable chair, taking in the wildlife and slowly sipping the pipe smoke along with a glass of lemonade, Perrier water or orange juice is relaxing and intoxicating. There is no requirement for spirits (I have the odd relapse) as spirit drinks such as whisky are apparently not a healthy option when smoking a pipe.

Of course, you never inhale pipe smoke and by sitting outside, there is less chance of you inhaling secondary smoke exhaling from your mouth or your pipe. If you are smoking correctly and taking your time, sipping the pipe smoke rather than taking huge draws, you should not experience tongue bite or pain in the roof of your mouth. If your pipe becomes too hot, especially on a very warm day, it is a simple matter to put it down in the shade, let it cool whilst enjoying your cool drink. You can re-light it and apply the tamper to push down the hot ash onto a new layer of tobacco.

When you are finished smoking and the pipe has completely cooled down, the process of cleaning the pipe is most enjoyable. I remove the stem, clean it out with a pipe cleaner, and using the pipe cleaner clean out the entrance hole to the base of the bowl. I always use the pipe cleaner folded into a half circle to clean out the inside of the bowl. Then I let the pipe and its stem rest for a while to let any remaining dampness dry out before inserting a new carbon filter in the stem and refitting the stem. I always smoke my pipes with a carbon filter fitted and when you remove the old one, you can clearly see that it has done its work as parts of it have turned brown in colour.

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