

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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## NEWSLETTER

No. 83 NOVEMBER, 2011

### From The Collection

In the museum collection can be found a number of items which reflect the widespread practice of smoking in early Australian society - whether it be pipe smoking, "roll your own" or lighting up a manufactured cigarette.

Tobacco smoking first reached Australian shores when it was introduced to northern-dwelling Indigenous communities by visiting Indonesian fishermen in the early 1700s. When British settlement began both convicts and free settlers quickly began to follow British patterns of smoking.

Pipe smoking was the most common means of tobacco consumption in the 19th century, with imported leaf coming from Brazil, and later, North America, to supplement the local produce.



This metal tobacco cutter (guillotine style), is mounted on a wooden base, with a wooden striker plate. It was donated by Roy Buckland.

**Question :** Was tobacco grown in Orbost?

This Meerschaum pipe was donated by Mrs F. Scott. It is still in its original wood and leather case.



Meerschaum is a white clay material commonly used in making pipes which were used mainly by the wealthy upper class.

When new, a meerschaum pipe will be creamy white or bone colored. As the pipe is used, it acts as a natural filter for nicotine, and changes colour from yellow to amber to a deep leathery brown.

Meerschaums were carved with elaborate scenes, faces, figures, animals and natural motifs.



These four items are all containers for matches.

**Question :** *Do you recognize any of these items?*



**Wax vestas were issued to A.I.F. troops in the southwest Pacific campaign during WW11.**

**Vesta cases, or pocket match safes** (such as the ones below and to the left) were small portable boxes made in a great variety of forms with snap shut covers to contain vestas (short matches) and keep them dry.

Most have a ribbed surface, usually on the bottom, for lighting the matches.

So called after the name of one of the early makers (which was taken from the goddess Vesta, a Roman deity of fire and the hearth), they came into use around the 1830s and were produced extensively between 1890 and 1920.



During this period, almost everyone carried strike anywhere matches, so they could light stoves or lanterns. Early matches were unreliable and prone to ignite from rubbing on one another or spontaneously. So people carried a match safe to protect the matches.

Their use declined with the invention of pocket petrol lighters.

### **Match Facts**

*# A match was originally a length of wick or cord which burned at a steady rate and was used to fire cannon.*

*# Sweden is the biggest producer of matches in the world and the world's only match museum is in Sweden.*

*# Early matches were made by hand and a good worker could produce 4-5000 match sticks per hour.*

*# During WW11 a match box produced by the Diamond Match Company gave instructions to French resistance fighters on how to derail a train!*

## Cigarette Smoking

The earliest forms of cigarettes were largely indistinguishable from cigars and were known to have been used in Central America around the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Tobacco and various psychoactive drugs were often a part of religious rituals in the Mayan and Aztec civilizations. Cigarettes were originally rolled using corn husks and paper wasn't used until the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The French gave them the name “cigarette” (from the Spanish word “sigarito”).

English soldiers took the custom to England after the Crimean War (1853-1856) having learnt the art from their Turkish comrades and Russian enemies. Cigarettes were hand-rolled even in factories until eventually cigarette making machines were developed and sales of the product soared.



*'Cameron's Havelock Superior Mixture Smoking Tobacco' and "flake cut Virginia tobacco" tins manufactured in Melbourne, by the British Australasian Tobacco Co Proprietary Limited.*

*Many Aussie diggers still liked to “roll their own”.*



In Australia although, initially dismissed as effeminate or “dandified” by some, the cheapness and convenience of cigarettes changed the way Australians smoked forever. During wartime Australian soldiers were given tobacco rations in several forms: plugs for chewing, shredded for pipes and roll-your-own cigarettes, but most was in the form of packs of cigarettes.

Meanwhile attitudes towards smoking among women had begun to change as well. While clandestine smoking may have been indulged in by the avant-garde and the fashionable, prior to the First World War, the changes in society during the 1920s brought female smoking into the open, and in the following decades advertising began specifically to target women.

By the end of the war, more than a quarter of Australian women were smokers, along with almost three quarters of adult males.

The prevalence of smoking in the Australian population has been declining since the 1950's and the majority of Australians these days are non-smokers. Unfortunately while smoking rates are declining in the developed countries, it is increasing in underdeveloped countries.