

SNUFF



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Snuffing is no Joke

Tsar Michael I of Russia ordered that snuff takers should have their noses cut off, whilst smokers should have their lips slit, be whipped for the first offence and executed for the second.

Sultan Murad IV of Turkey loathed smoking so much that in 1630s he ordered that anyone caught smoking should be beheaded.



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Sniff up thy snuff

If you take snuff it surely shows
With waistcoat stained, and so's your nose
But don't ee fret, it ain't so rough
No-one's been known to die of snuff.
Sniff, sniff, sniff up thee snuff
There's a snuff mine in Yatton got tons of the stuff.

Now Doctor Wills will cure all ills
Without no potions or no pills
He treats his patients like himself
To an ounce of snuff on National Health.
Sniff, sniff, sniff up thee snuff
There's a snuff mine in Yatton got tons of the stuff.

When we get old and turning grey
No longer boasting twice a day
When time comes round to go to bed
You'll take a pinch of snuff instead.
Sniff, sniff, sniff up thee snuff
There's a snuff mine in Yatton got tons of the stuff.

Old Dan'l Kane who lived near Chew
When ee died were ninety-two
Ee took snuff since he were seven
So let us pray there's snuff in heaven.
Sniff, sniff, sniff up thee snuff
There's a snuff mine in Yatton got tons of the stuff.
Sniff, sniff, sniff up thee snuff
There's a snuff mine in Yatton got tons of the stuff.

(Johnny Macey)

TALES



Inverness Museum & Art Gallery
Castle Wynd, Inverness, IV2 3EB
www.inverness.highland.museum

Pope Urban VIII issued a 1624 Papal Bull that made smoking tobacco punishable. He ordered that anyone found guilty of taking snuff in church should be excommunicated. This was because he believed that it led to sneezing, which too closely resembled sexual ecstasy.

Charles Darwin took snuff for many years of his life, having learnt the habit at Edinburgh as a student. In an attempt to reduce his intake he kept the snuff container in the hall of his house so that taking a pinch was an irksome interruption.

A Snuffy Funeral

When Mrs. Margaret Thomson a resident of east London died in 1776 she left instructions in her will that her coffin was to be filled with the best Scotch snuff, making it **'the world's largest snuff- box'**. She stipulated that the men honoured with the job of carrying her coffin should be the biggest consumers of snuff in the parish. Six maidens accompanied the coffin carrying snuffboxes and the clergyman had to go before them taking copious quantities of snuff. The faithful women servant followed the cortege placing a liberal handful of snuff every 20 yards in the street for the crowd. As a final act of generosity, two bushels of good quality snuff were distributed at Mrs. Thomson's door on the day of her funeral.



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Parliamentary Snuff

The House of Commons has a communal snuff box. The name of the snuff offered is 'English Rose'. The current snuff box was presented by Winston Churchill after the previous silver box was destroyed during the Blitz. The present box, in the charge of the Chief Doorkeeper, is a simple wooden one, divided into two compartments lined with pewter, and bearing a silver plate on the lid with a list of doorkeepers. The box is special as the wood from which it was made came from timbers of the damaged House.

King of Snuff.

King George IV was a prodigious snuffer. It is said that he changed his snuff according to the time of the day. One room in each of his palaces was set aside for the storage of snuff, the largest of this being at Windsor. After his death most of the snuff that he had accumulated was sold back to the suppliers who in turn resold it under such names as 'The King's Mix', 'The King's Evening Mix' and 'The King's Martinique'

Highland Connection.

Snuff was so closely linked with Scotland and Scotsmen in the minds of most Englishmen that it led to the widespread use of the carved wooden effigies of Scottish Highlanders in full dress taking snuff in front of many English snuff shops. It is said that after the Battle of Culloden and the outlawing of Highland dress, all the snuff-sellers of England petitioned the government to allow them to keep their wooden Highlanders in front of their shops.



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Famous Snuffers

The French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte smoked 7 pounds (3 kilograms of snuff per month). It is said that his special blend of snuff was shipped to him from a shop in the Haymarket.



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The wife of King George III earned the name 'Snuffing Charlotte' for her over-indulgent habit of taking snuff, and her family called her 'Old Snuffy.'

Famous Fanatical Snuffer

Miss Mary Lamb, sister of the writer Charles Lamb, had a snuff habit which cost her more than she could afford. She acquired additional supplies by visiting acquaintances with a number of empty boxes in her bag. Opening one box and 'discovering' it empty, her generous acquaintance would often insist on filling the box. In one morning's visiting she could gather enough snuff to last her the week.