**Pipe Making**

Bits of old clay pipes dating from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth often turn up in gardens and old rubbish heaps, particularly those next to old pubs such as the old George Inn. Most such pipes are of plain design, though sometimes the maker's initials are stamped or embossed on the stem or the sides of the base. By the mid-nineteenth century fancy pipes became more popular. Some had patterns on the sides of the bowl, but others had the bowl shaped to represent animals or people. These elaborate pipes were the products of the major pipe factories, but simple pipes continued to be produced in large numbers by cottage manufactories in most towns and large villages, including Leafield.

**The process**

Pipe making was made possible in Leafield due to the presence of clay and firewood around the village. The clay was broken down into small pieces, then washed in a large wooden or copper tub to remove stones and other foreign matter. The excess water was then drained off and the clay placed on boards to dry and mature. The next stage was to roll pieces of clay into the rough shapes of the pipes to be moulded. After a short drying period, the moulder pierced the stem part with a brass rod before shaping the bowl in a two-piece brass mould with a hand-stopper to hollow out the bowl. After the pipe was dried out it was fired in an up-draught kiln fired by wood from the surrounding forest.

**Leafield pipe makers**

In the nineteenth century the ordinary working man preferred ordinary short clay pipes to the elaborate "fancies". These were very cheap and often given away with a pint of beer by the local publican. It is therefore no surprise that in the 1851 census records the Leafield pipe manufactory to have been sited at the Fox Inn. James Smith was the publican and he employed John Smith and Joseph Holloway as tobacco pipe makers. The remains of one of the furnaces where tobacco pipes used to be burned were still to be seen in the early twentieth century. John Kibble, the local historian, tried to establish the name of the last pipe maker in Leafield; however, he established that the man's nickname was "Old Gooseberry", he never found out his given name.