



## Deeply Carved Oak “Blind man’s” Table Snuff box

**D**eeply carved sycamore table snuff boxes can be found of varying quality of carving. Pinto shows two nice examples in his book on Tunbridge and Mauchline Ware. A more elaborately carved example was sold in Edinburgh at Bonhams on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011, full of carved figures and dogs.

This box is a wooden-hinged table snuff box, simply carved with a highland figure carrying a deer and accompanied by a dog to the lid, dogs carved to the sides and a fox (I think) carved to the front. It is carved more unusually from oak and measures 150 x 75 x 45mm. What makes this deeply-carved snuff box a bit different is that on the underside of the lid is a black label with gold lettering: “Oak of the Douglas Room – Stirling Castle – Destroyed by Fire 1855 – Restored by J. & W. Taylor, Builders, Glasgow, 1857 – Supposed to have been erected about the 10<sup>th</sup> Century.”



King. The murder triggered a civil war between the Black Douglases and James, yielding victory for James in 1455 at the Battle of Arkinholm.

The fire was caused by a live coal falling from a grate located in the Governor’s house. The fire spread fiercely and threatened an adjacent small powder magazine and the principal powder magazine containing eight hundred barrels and thereby the wider castle. The local militia fought the fire and one of their number, Charles Haimes, is credited with sparing no effort in dousing the flames and preventing them consuming the magazine, although the Douglas Room was lost. Lieutenant Dawson ascended the roof in an attempt to put the fire out and James Gentles from the local fire brigade played an heroic part. Sadly the exposure proved too much and Charles Haimes died on 1<sup>st</sup> December. [The 1898 book *Old Faces, Old Places, Old Stories of Stirling* by W. Drysdale has a detailed account of the fire and the Stirling Cemetery Web site commemorates Charles Haimes ([www.oldtowncemetery.co.uk](http://www.oldtowncemetery.co.uk)).]

The Stirling Burgh and County Directory 1886/7 records some words about the Douglas Room in its introductory pages: “.....on the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> November 1855, it was almost destroyed by fire, but since it has been as nearly as possible restored to its original appearance. From wood saved from the fire were made mementoes, which were readily bought by the tourist; and on the occasion of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Stirling in 1864, the Princess was graciously pleased to accept from the late Mr Crawford, bookseller, a copy of the *Lady of the Lake*, handsomely bound in the oak of the Douglas Room.” A contemporary picture of the room



The Douglas room is steeped in history and is so called because in 1452 William, the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Douglas, was murdered in this apartment in the presence, or even by the hand, of James II. The murder was the culmination of rivalry and a power struggle between William and the