

## Smuggler's Tales

*Tom Quinn*

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**Tom Quinn : Smuggler's Tales** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Smuggler's Tales:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Mostly the 18th and 19th centuriesBy Peter Durward  
HarrisSmuggling has occurred ever since the English government decided several hundred years ago to raise revenue in the form of excise duties on certain goods, and at such punitive levels that enough money could be made from smuggling to make it worthwhile. While a lot of the smuggling was between England and mainland Europe, there was also plenty smuggling between England and Scotland and between Scotland and Europe. I think Ireland and Wales were also involved though there isn't a lot of mention of them in this book. There was also smuggling from England to mainland Europe, particularly of wool, when heavy export duties were imposed on wool exports to secure supplies for the domestic manufacture of woollen goods. No mention is made of contemporary smuggling, of which there is plenty, but I didn't expect that as the author invariably writes about how things used to be. The most recent stories featured in this book are from the early twentieth century, but there aren't many of those here.The stories featured are often very short, no more than a page or two, but a few run to several pages. This mix is inevitable given the sources used, which include personal memories from descendants of smugglers, official record offices, old books, newspapers and journals. My own family history includes a great-great-great-grandfather who was a shoemaker by trade but who was also a smuggler. According to information handed down within the family, he got caught and spent a long time in Stonehaven jail, although his adventures do not feature here - and I would be very surprised had they done so, especially as no official records could be found confirming this, Still, at least this book gives some idea of what my

ancestor might have been up to and the risks he took. (On the other side of my family, I have another great-great-great-grandfather who would have known all about smugglers, as he was a customs officer. However, looking at their dates of birth, it is clear that he would have been a child when the smuggler was jailed.) At one time, smugglers were popular with the public, as they were often individuals working alone and not causing any trouble except, of course, for the officials who were trying to stop them. Even before the time my ancestor was smuggling, their popularity was in decline due to their increasing use of violence, itself partly a result of a trend for individual smugglers to organize themselves into gangs. There are many fascinating stories here, showing that a lot of smugglers had a code of ethics despite what they were doing. For example, some of them would save the lives of customs officers who were in danger of drowning. The author seems to cover all aspects of smuggling as it used to be, clearly illustrating the dangers that smugglers faced but also explaining that the smugglers were usually better seamen than the customs officers because governments, then as now, preferred to do things on the cheap as far as possible. However, some customs officers were also smugglers and it seems that they sometimes handed in their own smuggled goods but recorded it as a successful capture from other smugglers! If you want to read about smuggling as it used to be, this could be just what you are looking for.

Tea and tobacco, lace, silk and many other products were brought into almost every coastal region and the spirited away by river, road and mountain path. Meanwhile, from Scotland and Ireland, illegally distilled whisky found its way into England over the sea and across every inch of land border. The men and women who carried on the smuggler's trade were almost universally admired simply because they brought goods to those who could not otherwise afford them. Even the wealthiest landlord and the local clergy turned a blind eye to their activities. Although the days of the romantic smugglers ended during the middle 19th century, the memory of their deeds - and occasional misdeeds - lives on in a thousand local legends and tales of battles and extraordinary escapades. It is the best of these stories, many of which have been handed down through generations of the same family, are retold in this text.