

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO CLAY TOBACCO PIPES AND THEIR STUDY

**Historical Background and Key Features** Clay tobacco pipes were first made in Britain during the second half of the C16th. Tobacco was initially very expensive and smoking tended to be confined to those who had access to it or who could afford it. As a result, pipes of this date are rare. From the early C17th the price of tobacco fell rapidly due to the establishment of the plantations in America and as a result of extensive tobacco growing in England, which persisted until well into the century, despite repeated attempts to prohibit it. Pipemakers spread rapidly across Britain to meet the demand for pipes and were to be found in many small towns from the early C17th through to the late C19th. The early pipemakers often used local clays, where they were available, and they tended to operate from small, family run workshops, which typically supplied an area within a radius of around 10-15 miles. Many ports, however, developed extensive overseas markets with the result that British pipes are found on colonial sites all over the world. From the C18th better ball clays (white-firing secondary clays), principally from Devon and Dorset, became more widely available and larger manufactories appeared, especially in the principal towns and ports. Factory style workshops developed during the C19th and operated into the C20th; the last is still producing pipes by traditional methods today. Although C19th pipemakers experimented with mechanical production the majority of the pipes were always made using traditional techniques, which have changed little since the C17th. Local styles of pipe evolved from the mid-C17th onwards and these evolved rapidly to keep up with changing fashions. Many pipemakers also marked their pipes with their name or initials. Stamped marks are generally found on the heels of C17th pipes and on either the stem or heel of C18th pipes. Some makers used stamped stem or bowl marks into the C19th. Moulded initials on the sides of the heel only become common from the end of the C17th onwards and became common in many areas during the C18th and C19th. Moulded stem marks were used from the early C19th onwards. Early examples tend to be in relief with later examples generally being incuse. Occasionally rubber-stamped or transfer-printed marks are found on pipes dating from around 1850 or later. The combination of mass production, short life expectancy, changing styles and makers' marks make pipes an ideal means by which to date post-medieval sites and study local trade and marketing patterns.

**Excavating Pipes** Clay tobacco pipes provide one of the most sensitive artefact types for dating and interpreting Post-Medieval deposits and so all clay pipe fragments encountered during excavations or fieldwork should be retained and cleaned for study. Some makers' marks are very faint and can only be seen on a clean, dry pipe under a strong, low light and all fragments are required for a proper assessment of an excavated group. Where discrete deposits containing large fragments of pipes are encountered, such as pits, sieving should be considered to recover all fragments since complete examples can only be reassembled when all fragments are present.

**Recording Pipes** Reports should state the total number of fragments recovered as well as providing a breakdown by bowl, stem and mouthpiece. A database should be used to log pipe details in a manner that allows the data to be sorted by each attribute, such as context, date, maker's mark, etc. The more diagnostic pieces, such as bowls and marked or decorated pieces, should be individually logged and dated, whereas plain stems can be bulk listed by their various attributes and/or context. A separate line or data entry record should be created for different fragment or group of fragments within each context. The most useful fields to include in a recording system are (reading down the columns): -

Site / Context / Sample details	Stem Bore (in 64ths of an inch)	Christian name or initial
Individual fragment identifier	Details of any burnishing	Surname or initial
Bowl count (for each line entered)	Details of any internal bowl mark	Any other marks
Stem count (ditto)	Milling details	Location and type of mark
Mouthpiece count (ditto)	Rim finish details	Decoration
Fragment date (ditto)	Mouthpiece type and finish	Drawing number

A comments field is also useful to allow free text. Once a detailed record of all fragments from a site has been compiled it is also useful to prepare a context summary, providing a condensed listing of pipe evidence for each individual context. This should include totals for the numbers of bowl, stem and mouthpiece present and details of other key elements, such as marked and decorated pieces and the dating evidence provided by the pipe group. A context summary is often the most useful tool for an excavator in dating and interpreting excavated deposits or in comparing the pipe evidence with other classes of finds. Guidelines for recording pipes can be found online at [www.pipearchive.co.uk/pdfs/howto/Guidelines%20Ver%201\\_2%20030917.pdf](http://www.pipearchive.co.uk/pdfs/howto/Guidelines%20Ver%201_2%20030917.pdf) and <http://scpr.co/Guidelines.html>.

**Preparing Reports** A pipe report should include a statement as to the overall number of bowl, stem and mouthpiece fragments recovered as well totals for the various classes or significant groups discussed. The pipes should be considered both in terms of their contribution to the dating and interpretation of the excavated deposits as well for any evidence that they provide about the nature and production of the pipes themselves. So far as possible the pipes should be discussed and set in both their local and regional context. Any previously unrecorded bowl forms, marks or decorative schemes should be described and illustrated. Illustrations of pipes should always be prepared for publication at life size and, wherever possible, the bowl or thicker end of a stem fragment should be shown facing to the right of the page. Details of stamped marks should be published at twice life size with relief

lettering or designs being shown in outline and incuse lettering or designs in solid black. Burnished surfaces on pipes should be indicated with a thin broken line, following the surface curves of the fragment.

**Published Research** A huge volume of pipe research has been published over the last few decades. The best general introduction, although now rather dated, is still Adrian Oswald's *Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist*, which was published in 1975 by British Archaeological Reports of Oxford (BAR, British Series No 14). This includes county-by-county lists of pipemakers, which are still valuable as a first step in identifying pipes. The most extensive series of articles on pipes are to be found in the series *The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe*. These have also been published by British Archaeological Reports of Oxford. Details of the available volumes can be obtained from Hadrian Books Ltd, 122 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7BP. The volumes published to date are: -

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|-------|-------------------|---|
| I     | (BAR 63, 1979)    | Britain: The Midlands and Eastern England (P Davey, ed.)  |
| II    | (BAR S60, 1979)   | The United States of America (P Davey, ed.)   |
| III   | (BAR 78, 1980)    | Britain: the North and West (P Davey, ed.)  |
| IV    | (BAR S92, 1980)   | Europe 1 (various countries; P Davey, ed.)  |
| V     | (BAR S106, 1981)  | Europe 2 (Wallonia and Netherlands; two volumes; P Davey, ed.)  |
| VI    | (BAR 97, 1981)    | Pipes and Kilns in the London Region (P Davey, ed.)   |
| VII   | (BAR 100, 1982)   | More Pipes and Kilns from England (P Davey, ed.)  |
| VIII  | (BAR S175, 1983)  | America (both North and South; P Davey, ed.)  |
| IX    | (BAR 146, 1985)   | More Pipes from the Midlands and Southern England (two volumes; P Davey, ed.)   |
| X     | (BAR 178, 1987)   | Scotland (P Davey, ed.)   |
| XI    | (BAR 192, 1988)   | Seventeenth and eighteenth century Tyneside Tobacco Pipe Makers & Tobacconists (by L Edwards; P Davey, ed.)                               |
| XII   | (BAR S566, 1991)  | Chesapeake Bay (East coast of America; P Davey and D J Pogue eds.)  |
| XIII  | (BAR 239, 1994)   | The Clay Tobacco Pipe Industry in the Parish of Newington, Southwark, London (by C Tatman; P Davey, ed.)                                  |
| XIV   | (BAR 246, 1996)   | The Development of the Clay Tobacco Pipe Kiln in the British Isles (by A Peacey; P Davey, ed.)  |
| XV    | (BAR S809, 1999)  | The Kaolin Clay Tobacco Pipe Collection from Port Royal, Jamaica (by G Fox; P Davey, ed.)   |
| XVI   | (BAR S1042, 2002) | Negotiating African-American Ethnicity in the 17 <sup>th</sup> -Century Chesapeake (East Coast of USA; by J Cameron Monroe; P Davey, ed.) |
| XVII  | (BAR 352, 2003)   | Pollocks of Manchester: Three Generations of Clay Tobacco Pipemakers (by S. Paul Jung Jr; D A Higgins, ed.)                               |
| XVIII | (BAR 374, 2004)   | The Dynamics of Regionalisation and Trade: Yorkshire Clay Tobacco Pipes c1600-1800 (by S D White; P Davey & D A Higgins eds.)             |
| XIX   | (BAR S1590, 2007) | Les Pipes de la Quarantaine – Fouilles du Port Antique de Pomègues (Marseille), (by P Gosse; P Davey ed.)                                 |

For other publications the best source to consult is the *Bibliography of Clay Pipe Studies* published by the Society for Clay Pipe Research in 1989. This includes general works as well as county lists. The Society for Clay Pipe Research was founded in 1983 and has a worldwide membership of both private and institutional members. It publishes a bi-annual newsletter of about 50 pages as well as an occasional monograph series and holds a lively annual conference. Current membership rates and an application form can be found online at <http://scpr.co/Membership.html> or by emailing [S-C-P-R@hotmail.com](mailto:S-C-P-R@hotmail.com).

**Research Archives** A National Pipe Archive is held at the University of Liverpool. This consists of research notes, reference material and specialist publications relating to all types of pipe and smoking related items from all around the world (details available online at <http://www.pipearchive.co.uk/>). A free public display highlighting the Archive's work can be seen at the Victoria Gallery and Museum at the University of Liverpool (<http://vgm.liverpool.ac.uk/>), or the Archive itself can be consulted by prior appointment with the curator, Dr Susie White ([PipeArchive@hotmail.com](mailto:PipeArchive@hotmail.com)). Liverpool University also holds the Oak-Rhind Collection of papers and photographs relating to twentieth century pipe research and the Fraser Collection, a nineteenth century collection of material relating to all aspects of the tobacco trade and smoking. In particular, this collection holds a lot of original artwork and publicity material for Cope's Tobacco of Liverpool. Further details can be obtained from the archivist in charge of special collections at the Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool (0151 794 2000).

If you would like further information or advice regarding clay pipes, and in particular the identification, recording and interpretation of archaeological material, please contact the author on [S-C-P-R@hotmail.com](mailto:S-C-P-R@hotmail.com).