

The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe

VI. Pipes and kilns in the London region

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CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	1
The Aldgate Clay-Pipe Kiln by Alan Thompson	3
The Kiln of William Heath, Eighteenth Century Brentford Pipemaker by Alison Laws and Adrian Oswald	15
An 18th Century Pipe Group from Bedford Square, London WC1 by Adrian Oswald and Deirdre le Faye	67
Complete Restoration Pipes from London (c. 1660-1680) by E. & B. Jarzembowski	79 -
A Note on the Vernon Bowl by Richard Le Cheminant	87 -
A London Pipemaker's Stamper by Richard Le Cheminant	90 -
Clay Pipes Bearing the Prince of Wales' Feathers by Richard Le Cheminant	92 -
Armorial from Paul's Wharf by Richard Le Cheminant	102 -
Clay Tobacco Pipes From London and the South East by Richard Le Cheminant	127
The Clay Pipe Industry of the Parish of St. Olave's Southwark by Stephen Walker	173
A Group of Clay Pipes from Lambeth by Stephen Walker	183
Surrey Clay Tobacco Pipes by David Higgins	189

CLAY PIPES BEARING THE PRINCE OF WALES' FEATHERS

Richard Le Cheminant

Bowls decorated with the ostrich feathers of the Prince of Wales, bridging nearly two centuries, have been excavated both in this country and in what was formerly Colonial America, and it was felt that a closer examination of such pipes might be of interest. Bryant Lillywhite in London Signs, published in 1972, gives a succinct summary of the derivation and history of these feathers, with particular reference to taverns (although the sign was used by many tradesmen, notably booksellers):

'The Feathers sign, in many instances, is a contraction of the 'Plume of Feathers', 'Prince of Wales' Feathers', 'The Prince's Arms' and 'The Prince of Wales' Arms', and was probably used synonymously. 17th century tokens bearing feathers as the device are usually described as Prince of Wales' Feathers. The title 'Prince of Wales' is said to derive from the time of Edward I, who obtained the submission of Wales in 1276. His eldest son, afterwards Edward II, was born at Carnarvon in 1284 and in 1301 was created Prince of Wales. By tradition, the Prince of Wales' Feathers derive from the Black Prince who, having slain John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia, in the Battle of Cressy (1346), assumed his crest and motto. The crest was three ostrich feathers and the motto ICH DIEN—I serve—which for many years was the subject of much controversy. The male heir to the throne is born Duke of Cornwall, but is not Prince of Wales until this title is conferred upon him. At death, or succession to the throne, the title lapses to the Crown and can only be renewed at the Sovereign's pleasure.

The Prince of Wales' feathers is really a misnomer, for the plume is the badge of the Heir Apparent, whether or not he holds the title.

The Fethers, or Feathers, as a sign in London dates from the early seventeenth century and possibly existed earlier. It was very popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, less so in the nineteenth and at the present time only three remain in central London, and four in outer London.'

A large number of the P.O.W. armorial bowls found in London date from the second half of the eighteenth century and it is at this period that the most elaborate and attractively decorated varieties were produced. Several such bowls were excavated surrounding the pipe kiln of William Heath at Brentford,¹ which had a closing date of c. 1760, although the kiln fill produced pipes of a rather later date, of which some are shown in Fig. 1. There are various designs and spur initials of makers recorded. Atkinson and Oswald in their new study² of pipes bearing the Royal Arms establish a closely dated evolutionary sequence based on bowl shapes and their decorative detail, and give a comprehensive list of moulded spur initials on such pipes together with some probable makers. Examples from London are known with the initials FP moulded above the two outside feathers and are thought to relate to Frederick Louis, the eldest son of George II, who was Prince of Wales from 1729 until

his death in 1751.³ Others carry the feathers moulded on the front of the bowl, with the Royal Arms and supporters on the back (no. 4). An FP bowl is illustrated (no. 8), and a piece of stem (no. 2) also bears these initials either side of the emblem. Although this was found on the Thames foreshore, the style of decoration at either end indicates the pipe's likely place of origin as Chester or Nottingham.

Prince of Wales bowls, however, are known from further afield, notably at Plymouth, where an excavation of the Barbican revealed a number of crudely made, unsigned specimens copying London examples.⁴ These bore the corrupt motto 'Ich Dine' and were dateable to a West Country style of c. 1820-50. Additionally, London types with moulded spur initials were found at the Barbican dating to the second half of the eighteenth century. Oswald illustrates⁵ a bowl of between 1800 and 1820 from Stony Stratford, Bucks, bearing Prince of Wales feathers with supporters of a Goat, and the Lamb and Flag. Other pipemaking centres further north also produced such pipes in the eighteenth century, in particular Norwich. Although, as noted above, the great days of P.O.W.F. pipes were the latter half of the eighteenth century, they continued in a variety of forms throughout the nineteenth and a number, mainly from London and southern England are shown in Fig. 1. Prince of Wales bowls dating to the first half of the nineteenth century have been found in America at sites in New York, Fort Stevenson and Geneser Bay.³ In contrast, at Colonial Williamsburg, where excavations produced dozens of bowls bearing the royal arms, only two with plumes came to light, of c. 1760 dating.⁶ One was found on a tavern site in a rubbish pit of 1740-50, and the other, c. 1760, bore in addition to the feathers, a ducal coronet. The paucity of such bowls suggests, perhaps not surprisingly, that the Prince of Wales was of less importance to the citizens of Colonial America than the Monarch and that relatively few were imported at that period.

It is fairly clear that such pipes were made either to demonstrate loyalty to the Prince of Wales of the time, or for taverns of that name, and Lillywhite records between the years 1606 and 1851 over fifty 'Prince of Wales' or 'Prince of Wales' Feathers' taverns, as well as eighty-five 'Feathers'. One of the earliest known is at Fig. 1, no. 1, which illustrates an incised base stamp in intricate detail on a bowl of c. 1700, originating from the Salisbury area although found in the Thames. There was no Prince of Wales between 1688 and 1714, so unless it refers to the Old Pretender 'across the water', which seems implausible, it is likely to be a tavern pipe. Most, if not all of the types 25 and 26³ probably commemorate either Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales, referred to above, or, following his death, his son George, who became king in 1760. Lillywhite notes c. 1740s 'The Feathers at the side of Leicester Fields', a tavern sign probably intended as a compliment to its neighbour, Frederick, who lived in Leicester House when on bad terms with his father, and died there. The tavern was demolished in 1796 and replaced by Charles Dibdin's 'Sans Souci' theatre, and later still Burford's Panorama was built on part of the site. Later types (Fig. 1, nos. 27-33) almost certainly relate to the popular Prince Regent, king in all but name during his father's periods of insanity, and in his own right from 1820-30. One such bowl is the Dunhill pipe collection, which may be seen at their London offices, and

which bears on one side a bust of the future George IV with the plume of feathers on the other. Victorian Prince of Wales bowls of post-1850 are more likely to derive from public houses (e.g. Fig. 1, nos. 36, 41, 43, and 45) although Edward VII, born in 1841, came into his own as P.O.W. in the later decades of the Victorian era.

Acknowledgements

The writer is very grateful to Mrs. P. M. Lillywhite for giving permission for the reproduction of the introductory summary from her late husband's 'London Signs'. He is also indebted to Adrian Oswald for providing many of the illustrations and much of the information concerning the pipes discussed.

NOTES

1. 'Kiln of William Heath, 1738-45, Brentford' by A. Laws and A. H. Oswald (cf above pp. 15-66).
2. 'The Dating and Typology of Clay Pipes bearing the Royal Arms'. D. R. Atkinson and A. H. Oswald.
3. 'London Clay Tobacco Pipes'. D. R. Atkinson and A. H. Oswald.
4. 'Marked Clay Pipes from Plymouth, Devon'. A. H. Oswald.
5. 'Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist'. A. H. Oswald.
6. 'English Clay Tobacco Pipes, bearing the Royal Arms, from Williamsburg, Virginia'. Audrey Noël Hume.

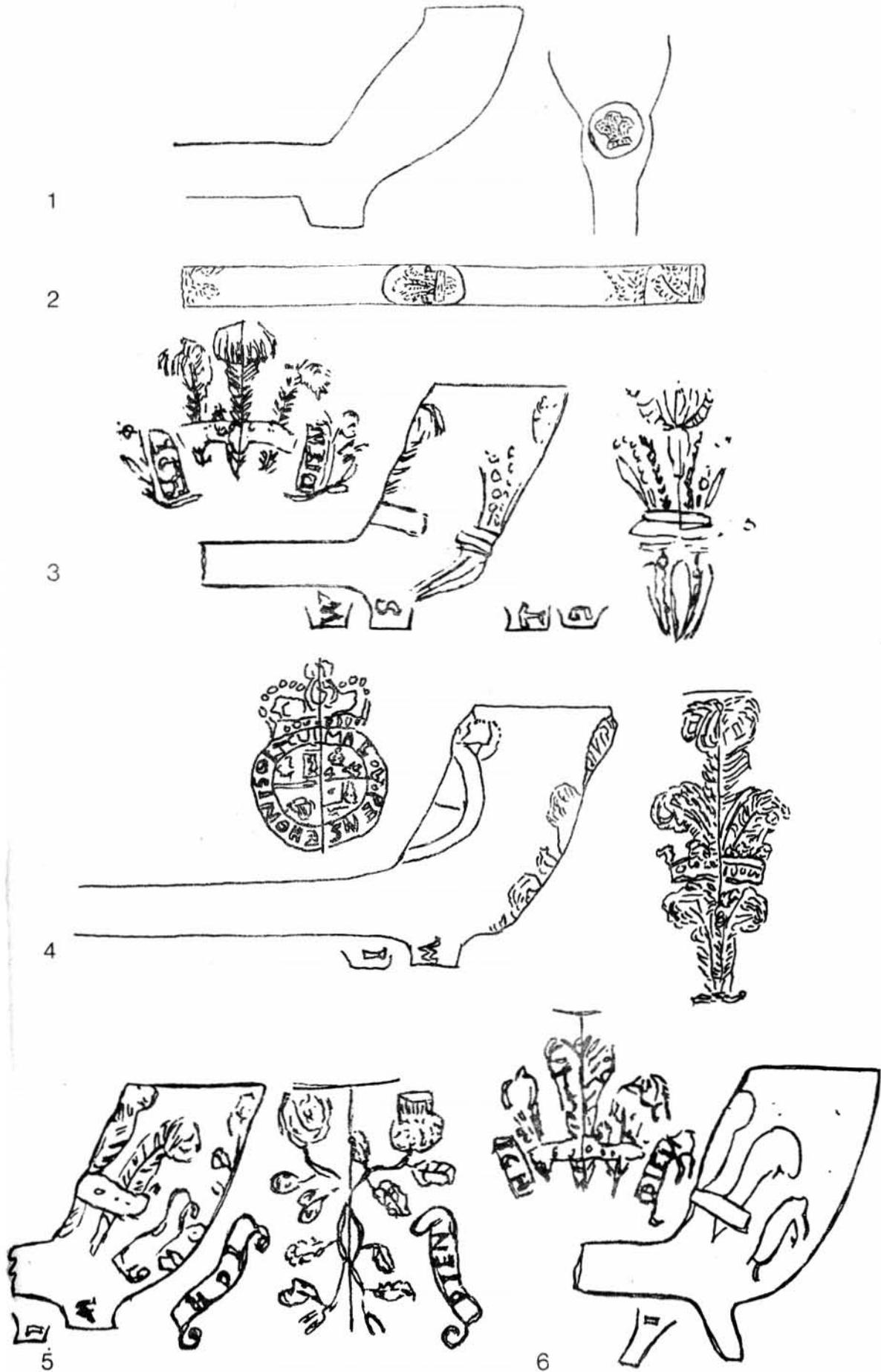


Fig. 1

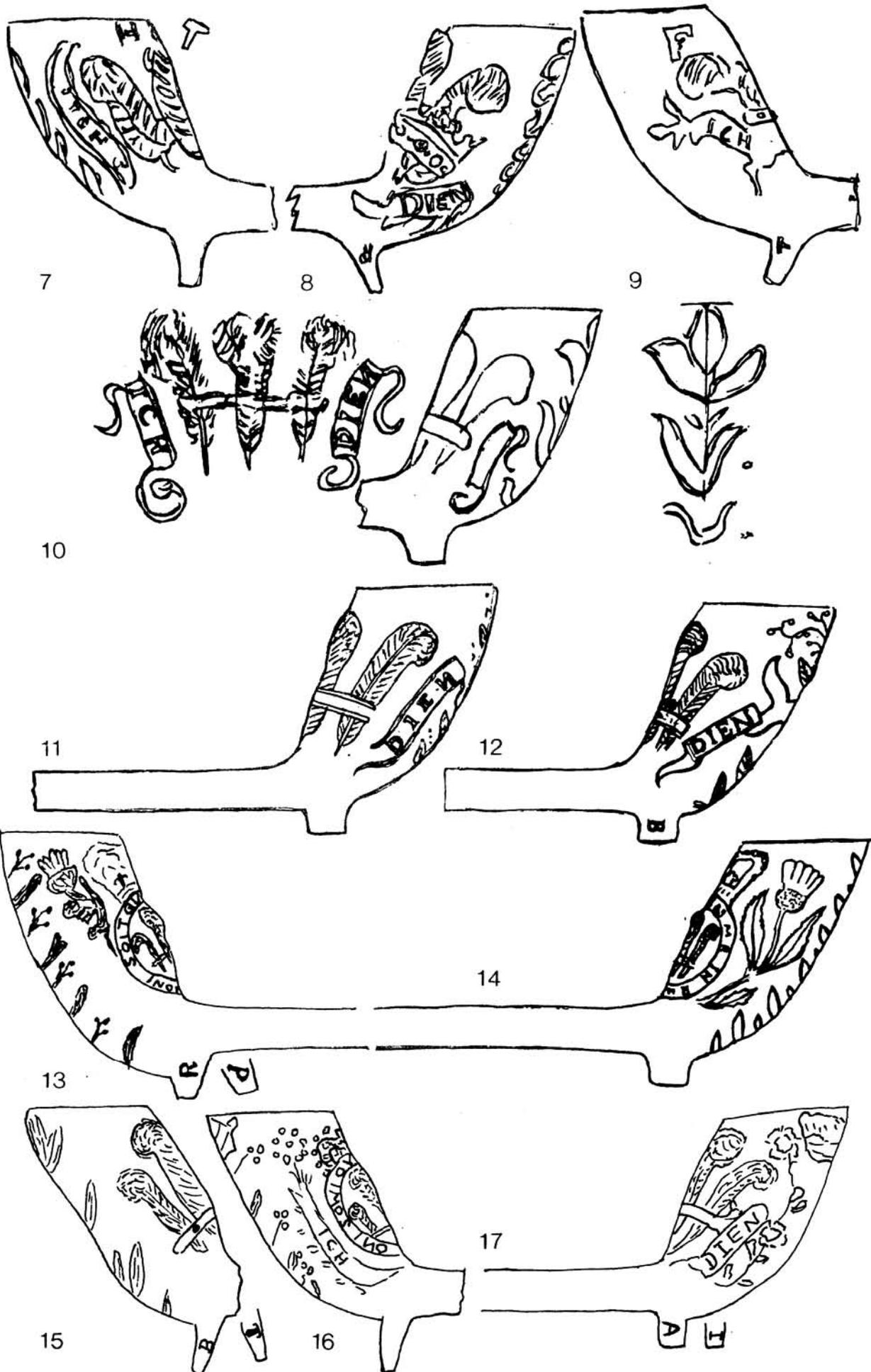
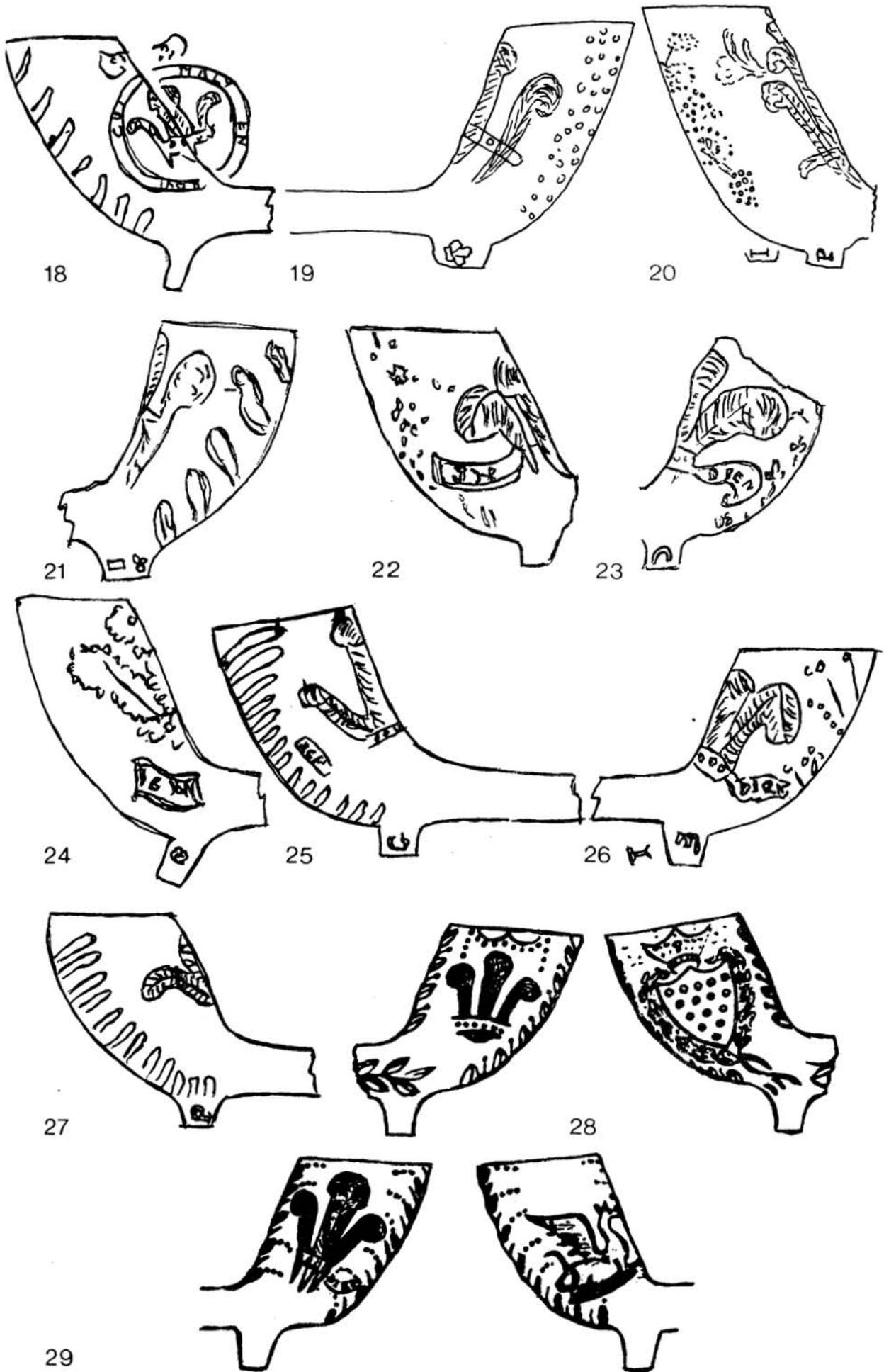


Fig. 2



29
Fig. 3

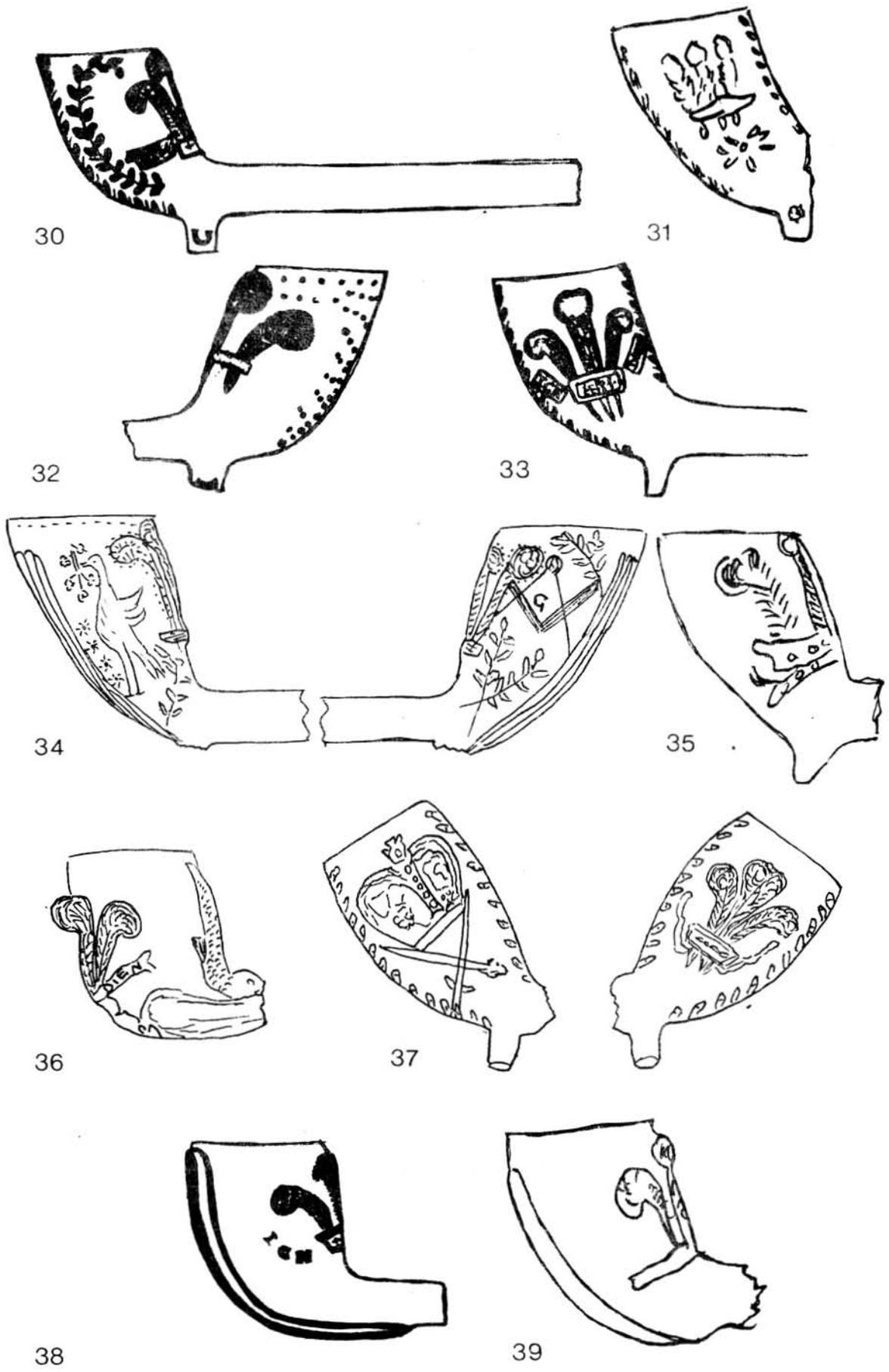


Fig. 4

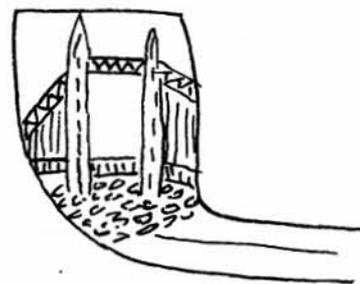
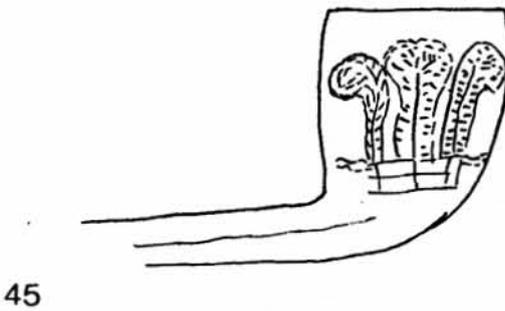
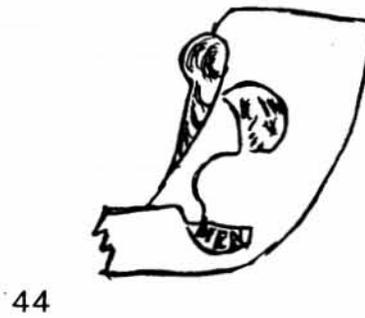
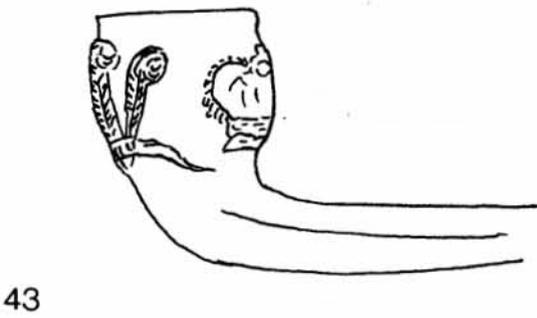
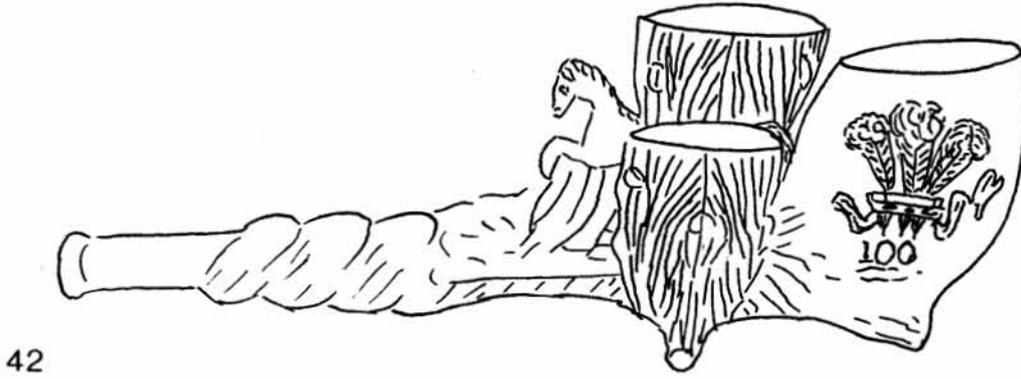
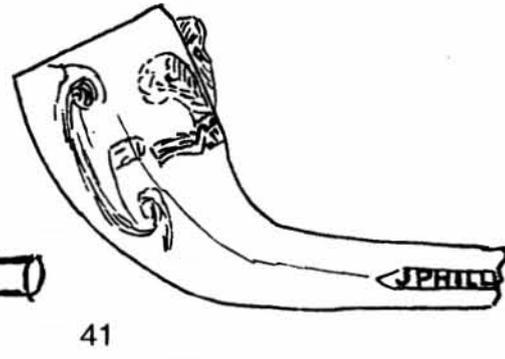
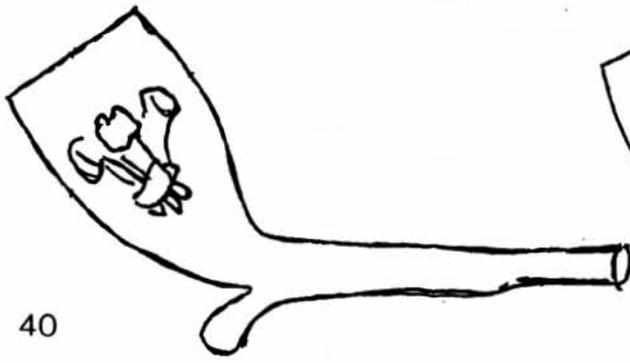


Fig. 5

PRINCE OF WALES FEATHERS' PIPES

1. 1690-1710 Finely incised base stamp. Salisbury origin. Queenhithe. RLeC Coll.
2. c. 1740 Section of stem. FP and feathers in relief. Origin perhaps Chester. Queenhithe. RLeC Coll.
3. 1750-80 Brentford excavations. W/S and T/G using identical moulds.
4. 1750-80 Brentford excavations I/W. Royal Arms back, feathers front of bowl. Another example RLeC Coll. but with lion and unicorn supporters and pointed spur.
5. 1750-80 Brentford excavations. Rose and thistle front of bowl. Also RLeC Coll.
6. 1760-80 Brentford excavations. I/?W spur. Similar RLeC Coll.
7. 1760-70 H/T maker's mark in relief on bowl; probably Henry Taplin¹ 1723-79; 1. Portsmouth, Hall Collection, 2. Southwark, Museum of London.
8. 1765-70 H/P, Brentford excavations (2 examples).
9. 1760-80 FP in relief either side of bowl, T/W spur. Lambeth excavations (2 examples), Museum of London; two similar examples T/W, F/W spurs, RLeC Coll.
10. 1760-80 Brentford excavations.
11. 1760-80 DRA Coll. RLeC Coll.
12. 1760-80 A/B Greenwich. DRA Coll.
13. 1760-80 R/P Putney. RLeC Coll.
14. 1760-80 I/W Greenwich. DRA Coll.
15. 1760-80 B/T Lambeth. RLeC Coll.
16. 1760-80 Motto: ONI SOWI OVI MALI PENCE; ICH DIEU. Putney. RLeC Coll.
17. 1760-80 I/A. Crown, rose and thistle at front of bowl. Putney and City. RLeC Coll. (2 examples).
18. 1770-90 Lambeth excavations.
19. 1780-1800 Moulded crowns on spur, Hyde Park. RLeC Coll.
20. 1780-1800 P/I. Tendrils of grape bunches front of bowl. Lambeth. RLeC Coll.
21. 1780-1810 B/I crowned (4 examples). Plymouth.

22. 1780-1810 Portsmouth.
23. 1780-1810 A/C. ?Arthur Coster, Fareham; Winchester.
24. 1780-1810 B/C. Old Kent Road. Cuming Museum.
25. 1800-1820 G/B. Probably George Benson, Pentonville 1802-20, Lambeth excavations; also similar H/P, POWELL/WESTMINSTER in relief on stem. ?Henry Powell 1820-28 working at Fulham. Elkins Coll., RLeC Coll.
26. T/F, probably Thomas Frost, 1803-44, Southampton. Oxford excavations.
27. P/W. ?Paul Webb, 1805-11, Lambeth excavations.
28. 1810-20 Unknown arms/P.O.W.F. Battersea. DRA Coll; also Plymouth.
29. 1820-20 City of London supporters/P.O.W.F., Greenwich, Collins Coll; R. LeC Coll.
30. c. 1820 C/R, Battersea. DRA Coll., also Portsmouth; similar P/W. Lambeth. RLeC Coll. Cf. 26 above.
31. 1820-30 York excavations.
32. c. 1830 Portsmouth. DRA Coll.
33. c. 1830 Battersea. DRA Coll., similar Barton-on-Humber; also with W. Ditchburn/Stepney in relief on stem (1821-45), City, DRA Coll; similar Chiswick.
34. c. 1830 Bird, ?dove with olive branch signifying peace/masonic emblems enclosing G (God). DRA Coll; RLeC Coll, Lambeth.
35. 1820-50 Plymouth.
36. 1860-80 Dolphin along back of bowl. RLeC Coll.
37. 1860-80 Crown, sword and sceptre/POWF. RLeC Coll.
38. c. 1870 Portsmouth. DRA Coll.
39. c. 1870 Portsmouth.
40. c. 1870 Complete, 3 inch stem, feathers glazed with red, yellow, green and black. Cuming Museum.
41. c. 1880 J. PHILLIPS/ASHFORD incuse on stem, (Kent). RLeC Coll.
42. c. 1880 An unusual 3-bowled pipe, complete, with running horse in centre; found beneath floor-boards of Victorian house in Brighton, RLeC Coll. The figure 100 on front bowl probably denotes the maker's type of pipe. Similar, larger pipe in Guildford Museum. Five and seven bowled pipes in House of pipes, Bramber, Sussex.
43. 1880-90 Crown and Feathers. RLeC Coll.
44. c. 1890 Otford Dump, Kent; similar ETON/NORWOOD on stem. RLeC Coll.
45. c. 1895 Tower Bridge/POWF. Perhaps public house. RLeC Coll. (two moulds).