



The Society for Clay Pipe Research

Report on the 2013 Conference - Dorchester, Dorset

by Susie White

The morning of Saturday 21st September dawned a beautiful sunny day and a great way to start our conference weekend. The conference, which had been organised by Robert Lancaster and Heather Scharnhorst, was held at the United Church in Dorchester. Everyone arrived bright and early to lend a hand setting up display tables and chairs. We had a good turn out with 33 delegates made up of members of SCPR and also people from the local history and archaeology community.

The programme started with tea and coffee at 09:30. An SCPR conference would not be an SCPR conference without a bit of a hiccup with technology and true to form it took a few minutes to get the laptop talking to the powerpoint projector - but we got there! The first paper of the day given by **Robert Lancaster** on recent research into Dorset clay tobacco pipes which really set the scene by introducing everyone to the pipes and makers from various centres in the county. This was followed by a fascinating paper from **Clare Randall**, the curator of Purbeck Mineral and Mining museum on the Purbeck ball clay industry. We are hoping to persuade Clare to write up a summary of her fascinating paper for a future issue of the newsletter.

Next to speak was **Heather Scharnhorst** who brought us up to date on the Wareham pipemaker Augustus Moore who she first introduced to us at the York conference in 2011. Heather's fascinating paper took us through to coffee break and a short Annual General Meeting. We are hoping to publish Heather's paper next time too!

There was then a brief pause whilst we had the AGM. The Society's committee had met the evening before and was able to report that the Society continues to be in very good shape with the membership currently standing at 136. The committee was also able to report that it was still their intention to try and pull together another of the Society's occasional monographs. This monograph will be the third to have been produced by the Society and is very near completion, so watch this space!

The indexing project which the author was pulling together on behalf of the Society, with the help of Paul Jung and Thelma Potts, is very near to being completed. A partial index has already been uploaded on to the website but it is hoped that with one last push, the index can be completed very soon. So something else to look out for!

With the business part of the day completed we moved on to the final paper of the morning session. This was a second paper from **Robert Lancaster** on the clay pipes recovered from the excavations at the Priests' House Museum in Wimborne Minster.

After lunch, which was a superb buffet, we moved on to hear papers on pipes from outside of the county. The first paper of the afternoon was given by **Roger Price**, one of the founding members of the Society. Roger spoke about the Ring's, a Dorset family who moved to Bristol and became pipemakers. This was followed by a paper from **Chris Jarrett** on two pipe kilns that have been discovered during work on the Thameslink viaduct project and included a short note from **Peter Hammond** with information about one of the pipe maker's who's products had been found there.

Afternoon tea break at this particular conference was a bit different to previous conferences in that it included a birthday cake, since 2013 marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Society. Although the first meeting and the first newsletter didn't happen until 1984, SCPR was actually 'born' in 1983 in Roger Price's kitchen! It therefore seemed appropriate for Roger to not only say a few words about the founding but also that he should be the one to cut the birthday cake, which was made by the author!

With everyone fully topped up with tea and cake we all settled down to the final session of the day. **Peter Taylor** presented two papers, the first of which was on Broseley exports before 1760. His second paper was a short presentation relating to duty on tobacco pipes at the very end of the seventeenth century.

The final paper of the day was from **Heather Coleman** who gave a fascinating account of the processes involved in the production of some of her incredible pipes - from the making of the mould right through to the finished pipe.

Everyone then lent a hand to help tidy away the chairs and tables so we could all re-convene in the Kings Arms Hotel for our conference dinner and a chance to talk about pipes a bit more!

The following day, we had a very interesting walking tour of Dorchester led by Robert which wound up in a very nice coffee shop with even more cake. The perfect way to finish off a very successful conference weekend! Many of the papers that were presented at the conference are going to be published in the newsletter for the benefit of those of you who were unable to join us in Dorchester. This issue includes the first 'batch'. On behalf of SCPR I'd like to say a big thank you to Robert and Heather for organising such a brilliant conference with a great mix of papers – something to suit everyone. I'd also like to say thank you to Heather's husband, William, and Thelma Potts who did more than their fair share of washing up and making sure that all the delegates were supplied with tea and coffee throughout the day.

So, where are we meeting next year? The answer is Warwick on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September 2014. More details will be posted on the website (<http://scpr.co/Conferences.html>) in the New Year. If you'd like to present a paper or talk about a pipe you have in your collection then please get in touch on SCPR@talktalk.co.uk.